ISSN 0712-7774

$2.25USA • $2.75CANADA • £1.25UK

CEREBUS
mothers & daughters
6

MIND GAME
V

156
MAR

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

Million Year Picnic in Boston was an unqualified success. I want to thank Barbara, Tony and Jim for all of their hard work. People lined up around the stove, up the stairs and out into the street. Later that day only a slightly smaller crowd at *Comicopia*. I'd like to thank Matt for all of his hard work, as well. Gary Susman did a nice big article in the *Boston Phoenix* and there were about a dozen retailers at the Diamond Warehouse in Boston who were nice enough to talk with me there. A fair number gave me the idea that if I were to vanish into thin air it wouldn't trouble them unduly, but then I have come to subscribe to Brian Hibbs' theory that there are only a few dozen stores keeping books like *Cerebus* alive. *Million Year Picnic* (as an example) buys over half of the *Cerebus* issues ordered by Capital/Rockland.

★★★★★★★★★★

Pittsburgh was up-and-down. No media interest apart from student radio station WRCT. At the same time I did an interview that Friday (arranged by Annette Swanberg) with a radio entertainment service out of San Diego that services over eleven hundred radio stations in the U.S. and Canada and Rich Goldman came all the way from West Virginia to do a TV interview and film some parts of the Great Eastern Convention. That part was up.

★★★★★★★★★★

Eide's Entertainment which is the largest comic store in Pittsburgh had the smallest turnout so far; a little over twenty people. I have this technique of drawing very elaborate head sketches when there's a small turnout so that everyone has to wait in line, because usually you sign their books and zip! they're gone and you just sit there looking very unfamous and stupid. At *Eide's* I was almost at the point of redrawing entire issues for people and signing my name in hand-drawn Baskerville Old-face. I managed to stretch it out over the two hours (don't ask me how). That part was down.

★★★★★★★★★★

A young couple came in towards the end of the *Eide's* signing and, never having *heard* of *Cerebus* they picked up copies of *Free Cerebus* and one of the *Melmoth* issues and said they would give it a try. That part was up.

★★★★★★★★★★

There was a monster turn-out at Jeff Yandora's *Phantom of the Attic*. Jeff had just taken over the store (which used to be part of a chain) last year, sometime, and is still experimenting in a lot of areas (which is something, obviously, that I like to see). Again people were lined up all around the store and all the way outside. Quick head sketches and not much time for conversation, but it was the best Saturday's business Jeff has done at *Phantom*. He sold out of his reprint volumes and I offered him some of the copies I had for selling at the con and he sold a bunch of those as well. That part was up.

★★★★★★★★★★

Bill Boichel runs *BEM* which is about as close to the perfect comic book store as you could hope to get, specializing in underground, alternative and avant-garde comic books. He carries Marvels and DCs but the store definitely doesn't emphasize them. Small turnout here as well. In stores that specialize in the avant-garde, *Cerebus* is considered the same as a Marvel Comic. I'm just not part of that Bros. Hernandez/ R. Crumb/Dan Clowes pantheon. If it hadn't been for the "Daveheads" (term coined by Larry Marder) who followed me from *Phantom of the Attic*, there wouldn't have been enough people to play euchre. I can't recommend the store and Bill too highly— I only wish I could have done better for them. This part was down.

★★★★★★★★★★

The convention got off to the fastest start of any convention so far and I was busy signing for the whole six hours. There was a lull here and there where I was able to do a more finished sketch in someone's reprint volume or sketch-book, but the line-up replenished itself pretty quickly. Connie Lingus said she had a great time and even sold a bunch of her self-published work. That part was up.

★★★★★★★★★★

The auction for the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund was pretty bad. The water colour of *Cerebus* with the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (Kevin Eastman, Gerhard and me) went for $150. The original painted cover to *Cerebus* 91 went for 85 dollars and the original cover to issue 39 went for 55 dollars. I've done sketches that cost more than that. That part was about as down as you can get.

★★★★★★★★★★

Time to finish issue 157, take a few deep breaths and brace myself for St. Louis and Los Angeles.

PRINTED IN CANADA

CEREBUS

NO. 156 MARCH 1992

DAVE SIM
President

GERHARD
Vice-President

LINDA BERZINS
Typesetting

MOTHERS & DAUGHTERS
a novel

•

BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 151 to Cerebus 162)
Flight

•

BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 163 to Cerebus 174)

•

BOOK THREE
(Cerebus 175 to Cerebus 188)

•

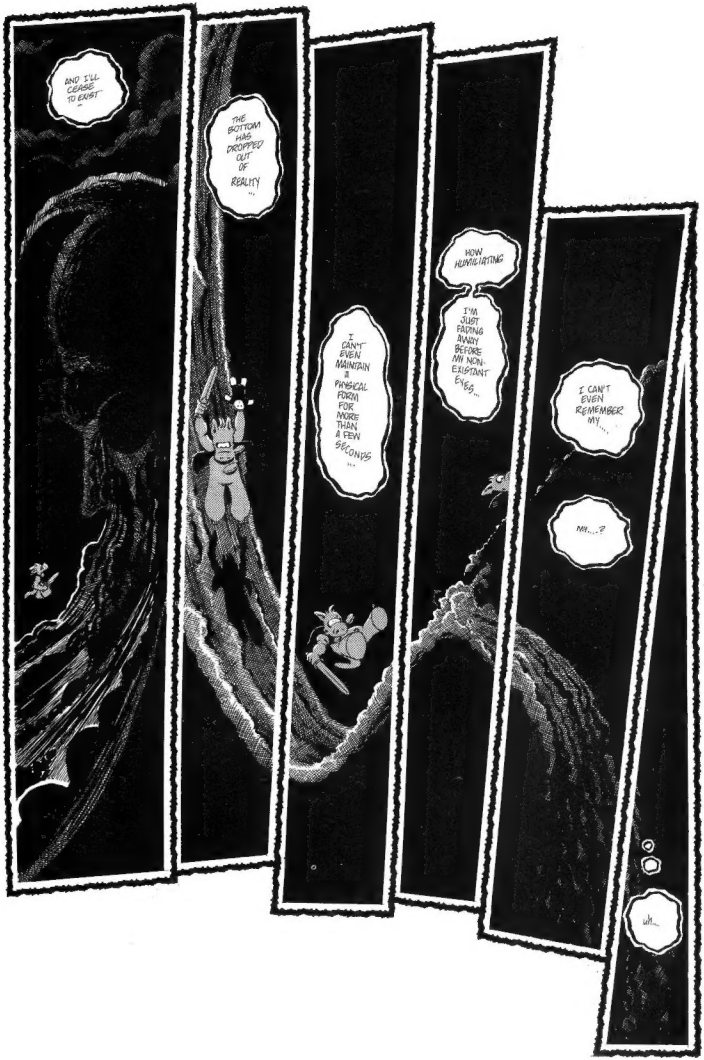
BOOK FOUR
(Cerebus 189 to Cerebus 200)

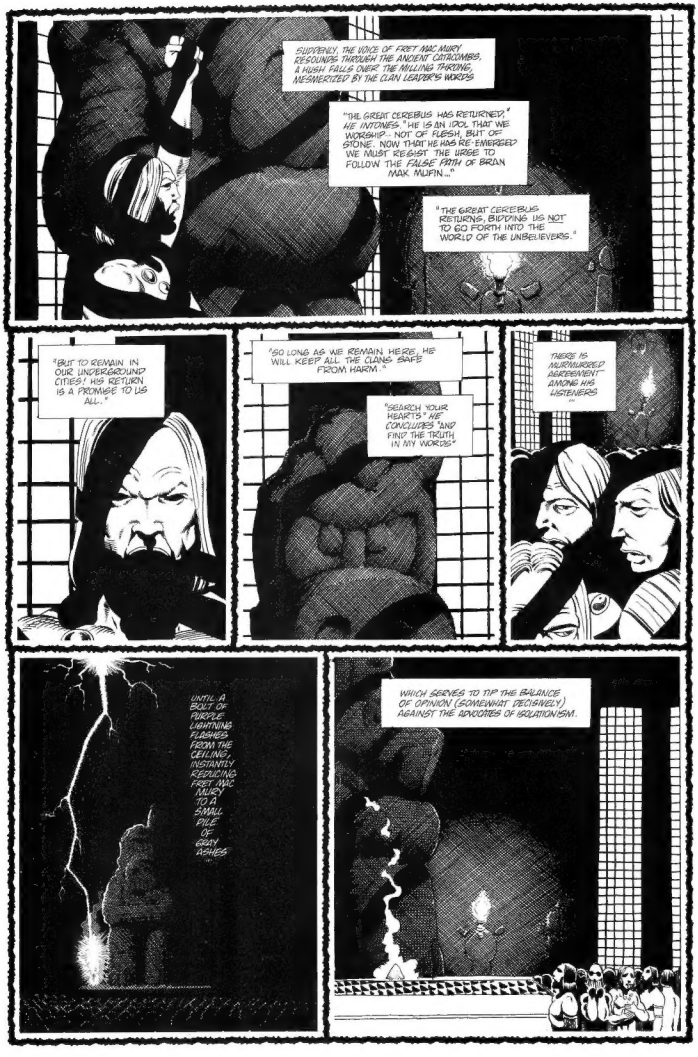
CEREBUS IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY AARDVARK-VANAHEIM INC. P.O. BOX 1674 STN. C, KITCHENER, ONTARIO, CANADA N2G 4R2

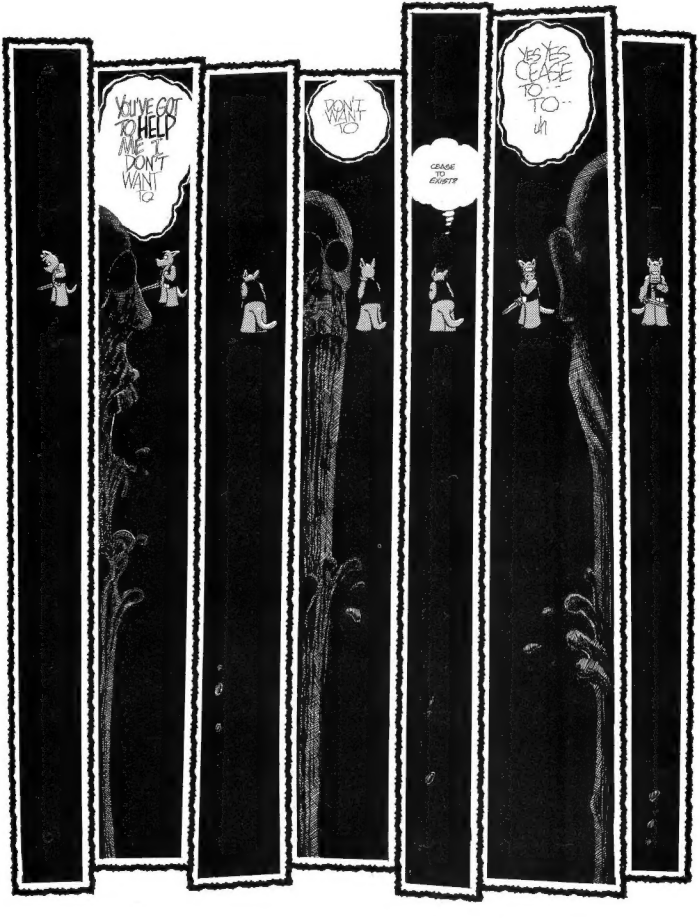
ALL CONTENTS © 1992 DAVE SIM.

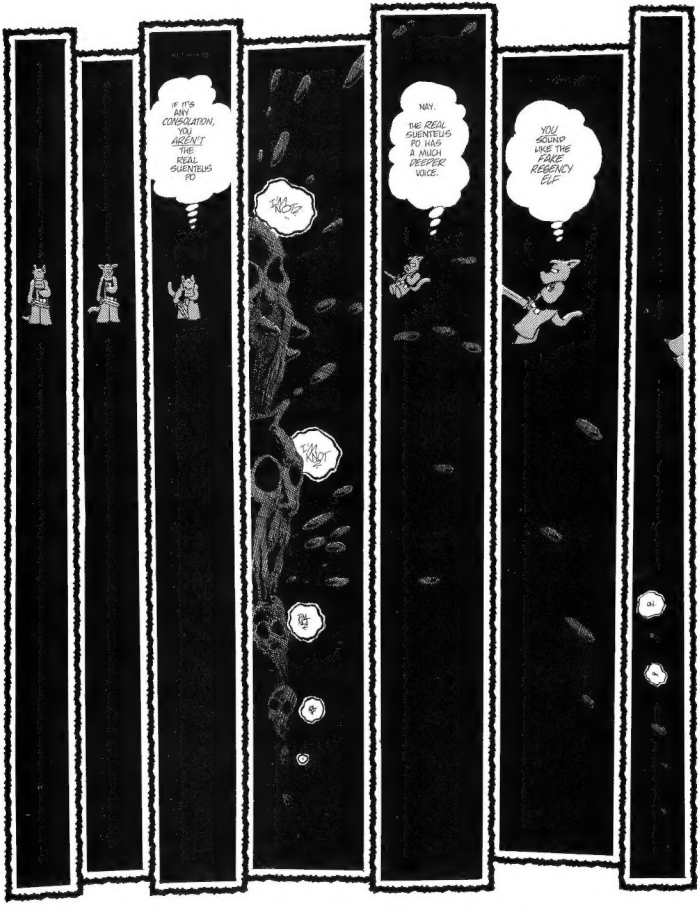
PRINTED IN CANADA BY **PRENEY PRINT & LITHO INC.**, WINDSOR, ONTARIO.

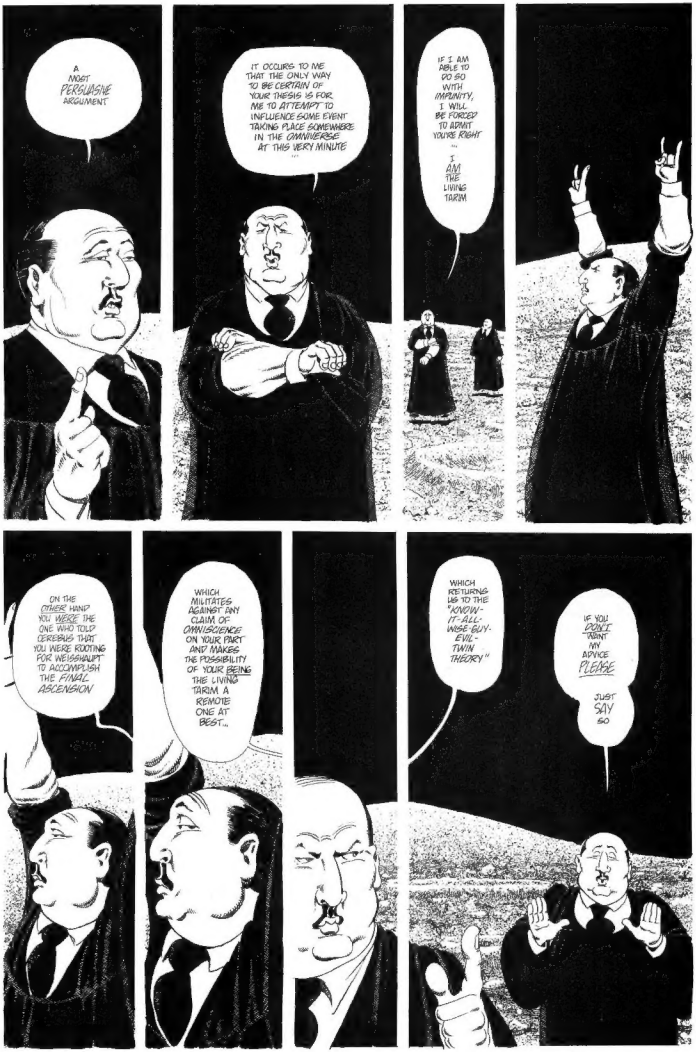
OR, PERHAPS AT YOUR DISSERVICE...
IT'S HARD TO TELL.
I DON'T KNOW WHO'S CAUSING ALL THE UNEXPLAINED APPEARANCES AND DISAPPEARANCES
THE MORE UNEXPLAINED OCCURENCES TAKE PLACE, THE MORE PEOPLE BELIEVE IN ILLUSIONISM
THE MORE THEY BELIEVE IN ILLUSIONISM THE MORE EVERYTHING BECOMES AN ILLUSION
MOST ESPECIALLY ME~
AT THE RATE THINGS ARE GOING, IN A FEW DAYS EVERYONE WILL BELIEVE IN ILLUSIONISM

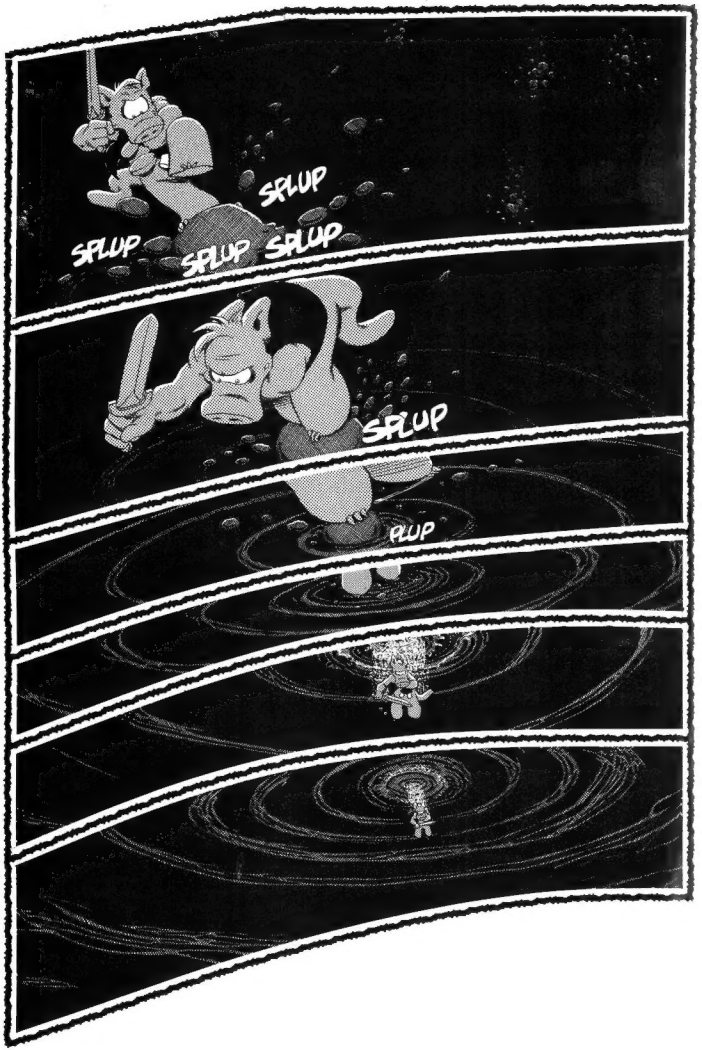

AND I'LL CEASE TO EXIST...
THE BOTTOM HAS DROPPED OUT OF REALITY...
I CAN'T EVEN MAINTAIN A PHYSICAL FORM FOR MORE THAN A FEW SECONDS...
HOW HUMILIATING
I'M JUST FADING AWAY BEFORE MY NON-EXISTENT EYES...
I CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER MY...
MM...?
uh...

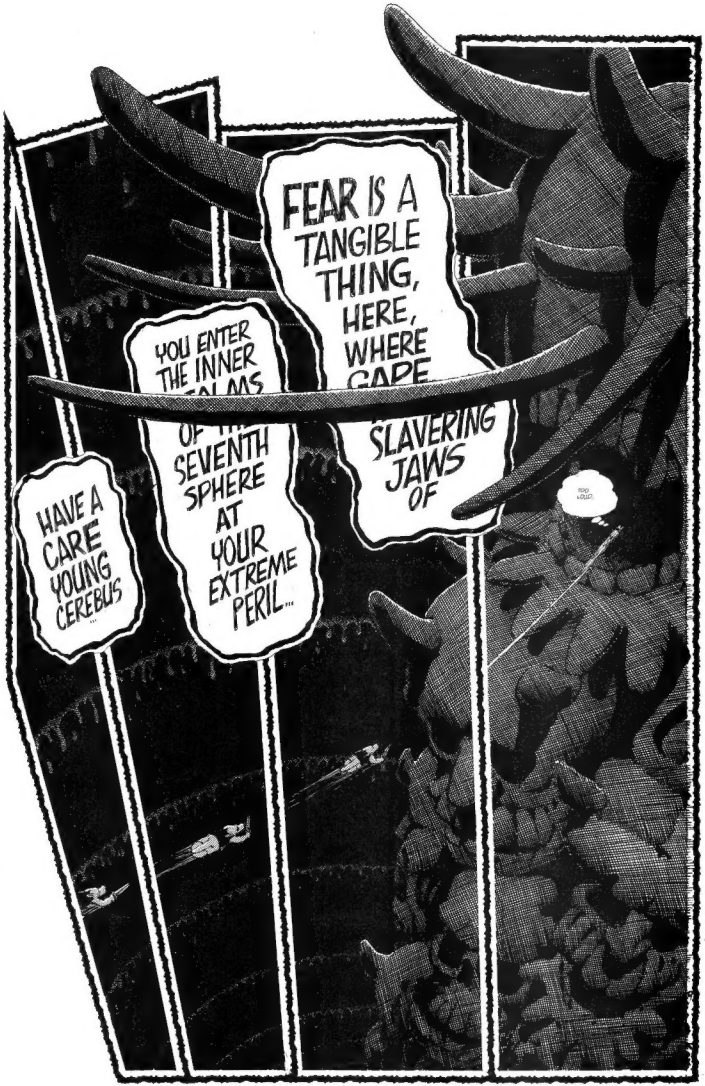

SUDDENLY, THE VOICE OF FRET MAC MURY RESOUNDS THROUGH THE ANCIENT CATACOMBS. A HUSH FALLS OVER THE MILLING THRONG, MESMERIZED BY THE CLAN LEADER'S WORDS
"THE GREAT CEREBUS HAS RETURNED," HE INTONES. "HE IS AN IDOL THAT WE WORSHIP... NOT OF FLESH, BUT OF STONE. NOW THAT HE HAS RE-EMERGED WE MUST RESIST THE URGE TO FOLLOW THE FALSE FAITH OF BRIAN MAK MUFIN..."
"THE GREAT CEREBUS RETURNS, BIDDING US NOT TO GO FORTH INTO THE WORLD OF THE UNBELIEVERS."
"BUT TO REMAIN IN OUR UNDERGROUND CITIES. HIS RETURN IS A PROMISE TO US ALL."
"SO LONG AS WE REMAIN HERE, HE WILL KEEP ALL THE CLANS SAFE FROM HARM."
"SEARCH YOUR HEARTS," HE CONCLUDES "AND FIND THE TRUTH IN MY WORDS"
THERE IS MURMURED AGREEMENT AMONG HIS LISTENERS
UNTIL A BOLT OF PURPLE LIGHTNING FLASHES FROM THE CEILING, INSTANTLY REDUCING FRET MAC MURY TO A SMALL PILE OF GRAY ASHES
WHICH SERVES TO TIP THE BALANCE OF OPINION (SOMEWHAT DECISIVELY) AGAINST THE ADVOCATES OF ISOLATIONISM.

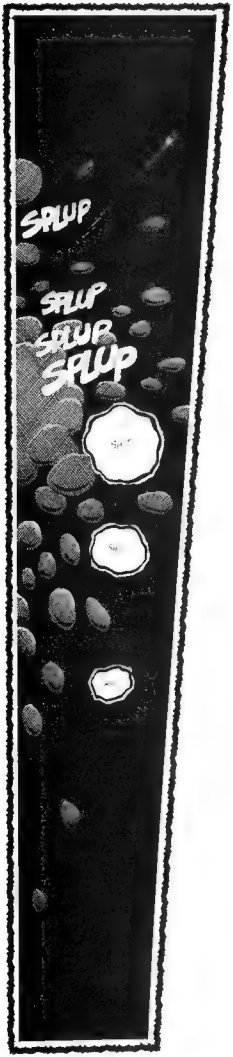

YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME. I DON'T WANT TO
DON'T WANT TO
CEASE TO EXIST
YES YES CEASE TO... TO... UH


IF IT'S ANY CONSOLATION, YOU AREN'T THE REAL SUENTELIS PO
THUD
THUD
NAY. THE REAL SUENTELIS PO HAS A MUCH DEEPER VOICE.
YOU SOUND LIKE THE FAKE REGENCY ELF
OI.


A MOST PERSUASIVE ARGUMENT
IT OCCURS TO ME THAT THE ONLY WAY TO BE CERTAIN OF YOUR THESIS IS FOR ME TO ATTEMPT TO INFLUENCE SOME EVENT TAKING PLACE SOMEWHERE IN THE OMNIVERSE AT THIS VERY MINUTE ...
IF I AM ABLE TO DO SO WITH IMPUNITY, I WILL BE FORCED TO ADMIT YOU'RE RIGHT ...
I AM THE LIVING TARIM
ON THE OTHER HAND YOU WERE THE ONE WHO TOLD CEREBUS THAT YOU WERE ROOTING FOR WEISSHAUPT TO ACCOMPLISH THE FINAL ASCENSION
WHICH MILITATES AGAINST ANY CLAIM OF OMNISCIENCE ON YOUR PART AND MAKES THE POSSIBILITY OF YOUR BEING THE LIVING TARIM A REMOTE ONE AT BEST...
WHICH RETURNS US TO THE "KNOW-IT-ALL-WISE-GUY-EVIL-TWIN THEORY"
IF YOU DON'T MIND MY ADVICE PLEASE
JUST SAY SO

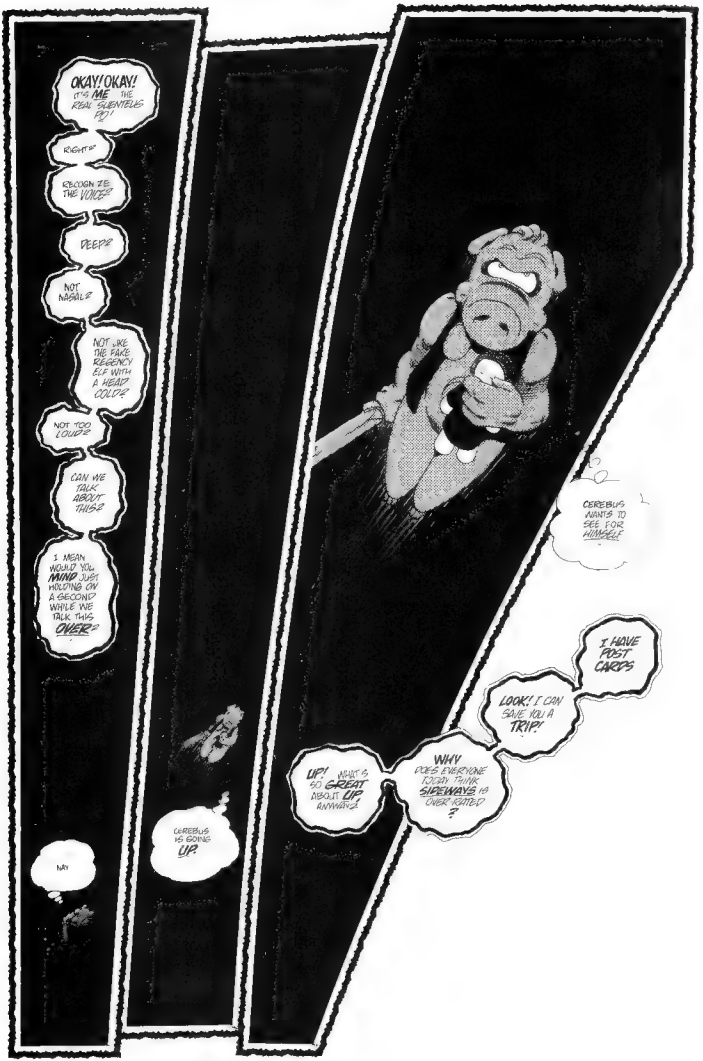

SPLUP
SPLUP
SPLUP
SPLUP
SPLUP
SPLUP

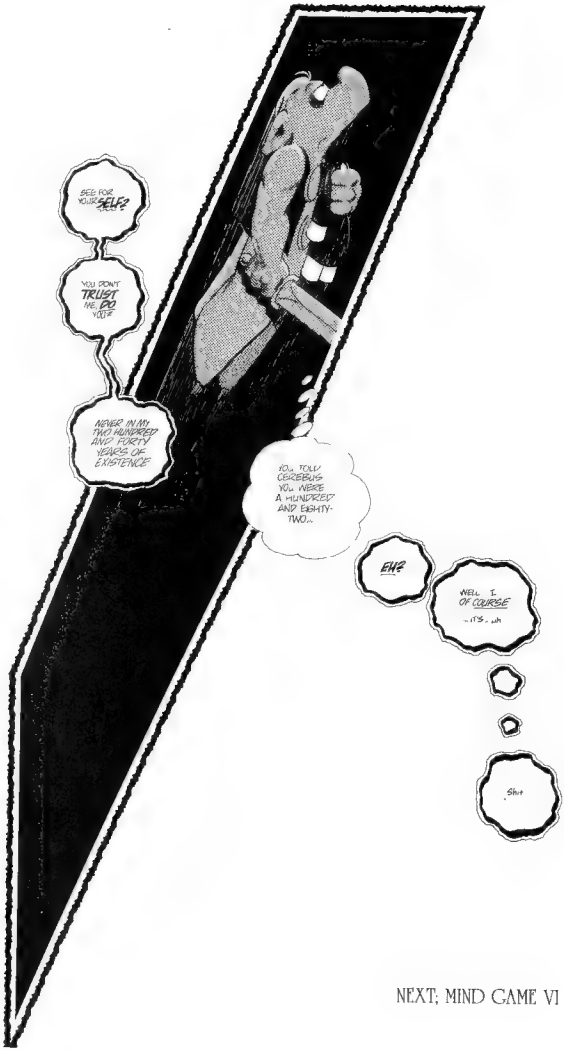

FEAR IS A TANGIBLE THING, HERE, WHERE
YOU ENTER THE INNER
SEVENTH SPHERE AT YOUR EXTREME PERIL...
SLAVERING JAWS OF
HAVE A CARE YOUNG CEREBUS...


SPLUP
SPLUP
SPLUP
SPLUP

YES, O GODDESS OF LIFE ETERNAL
I HEAR
AND I OBEY

THAT CANNOT BE RIGHT
YOU SEE? THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT... BUT MRS COPPS IS MOST INSISTENT. IF I BEGIN TO EXPANVILLE THE FOYER SHE SAYS THERE ISN'T TIME..
AND IF I TRY TO PROCEED WITH CONSTRUCTION SHE SAYS IT'S THE WRONG SIZE
S-WHAT MORE DO YOU DONE?
HALF OF MY -BLOODY- STAFF IS TEARING THE DAMN THING DOWN!
AND HALF OF THEM ARE BUILDING IT BACK UP!!
I'M SURELY DON'T MEAN TO RAISE MY VOICE
PERFECT. UNDERSTANDABLE MR HAWMOND
PLEASE RETURN TO YOUR DUTIES I'LL SEE WHAT CAN BE DONE


OKAY! OKAY! IT'S ME THE REAL SLEEPLESS IN!
RIGHT?
RECOGNIZE THE VOICE?
DEEP?
NOT NASAL?
NOT LIKE THE FAKE REGENCY ELF WITH A HEAVY COLD?
NOT TOO LOUD?
CAN WE TALK ABOUT THIS?
I MEAN WOULD YOU MIND JUST HOLDING ON A SECOND WHILE WE TALK THIS OVER?
NAY
CEREBUS IS GOING UP
UP! WHAT IS SO GREAT ABOUT UP ANYWAYS!
WHY DOES EVERYONE TODAY THINK SIDEWAYS IS OVER-RATED?
LOOK! I CAN SAVE YOU A TRIP!
I HAVE POST CARDS
CEREBUS WANTS TO SEE FOR HIMSELF


SEE FOR YOURSELF?
YOU DON'T TRUST ME, DO YOU?
NEVER IN MY TWO HUNDRED AND FORTY YEARS OF EXISTENCE
YO.. TOLLY CERBERUS YO.. WERE A HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-TWO..
EH?
WELL I.. OF COURSE ..IT'S.. uh
Shit

NEXT; MIND GAME VI

AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Okay. Let's take another try at answering the letters. It's the most common request on the Tour and I don't have time to answer the mail personally any more. So let's try it one more time.

So there I am, standing in line, at Comic Relief in Berkeley, waiting to get Dave Sim and Gerhard to sign a copy of *Free Cerebus*. I honestly didn't think to bring a copy of the regular *Cerebus* comic. I'm also planning to give Dave an envelope containing the last three issues of the first *Misspent Youths* series. I'm chatting with my brother, Glenn and trying to think of something intelligent to say to Dave. And to Gerhard, and I'm drawing a blank.

"Hi Dave! You're a genius!"

"Hi Dave, betcha can't guess who I am!"

"So, Gerhard, what's so great about Dave anyway?"

"Where did you acquire the drive to forge ahead with *Cerebus* despite all odds"

"Gerhard sir, what techniques do you use to draw those awe inspiring backgrounds of yours?"

Suddenly I'm standing at the counter. My mom shows up with comics to sign. There's a line of thirty people behind me. Do I say anything brilliant? Nah.

My brother tells me I acted incredibly nervous and seemed like I couldn't wait to get out of the store. I probably did. My preferred method of meeting people is to just kind of hang out and talk. I'm not so good at meeting people in large crowds, especially when I want to make a good impression.

It's terribly annoying: the people I manage to impress the most are those I'm not trying to impress.

Anyway — What I mean is —

Dave and Gerhard, your work on *Cerebus* is amazing. I'm consistently surprised, entertained and interested in seeing what happens next. I know I've praised you before but I don't think you mind being praised again.

Cerebus is an inspiration to me. A graphic narrative, creator owned and published, for over 150 issues. The idea of any comic book created by the same person (or team) for that long a time seems odd until one steps away from the narrow little comic book world. Many comic strips have been, and a few still are, created for decades by the same person (or team). Novelists have written about the same characters in novel after novel. But you've topped all of them. You published *Cerebus* yourself. You own and control what happens to *Cerebus*. To my knowledge no one else has done anything close to that.

I'm sure you know what a precedent you've set. You're not an idiot and you've fought hard to get where you are. I just want to acknowledge you. I wouldn't be able to do what I'm doing, or even consider some of the things I want to do if you hadn't done *Cerebus* as you have.

I don't expect to start any revolutions but I am going to try to move the industry (yuck) forward. The future is not in superheroes. It isn't in "collectible" multi cover hologram diecut glow in the dark up your ass special editions. *Action* #1 is "worth" so much because everybody's parents threw away their copies. The future must be in diversity. In attracting new readers.

Misspent Youths is on hiatus. I know that if I kept at it to #6 and beyond I would become a better artist. There just a part of me that's too unsatisfied with the way *M.Y.* was looking and reading. So, this once, I'm taking the opportunity to start again. I'm only going to do it once. It's a luxury I'm allowing myself as a beginner. I have a clearer idea of what works artistically and a better understanding of the business I'm getting into. When *Misspent Youths* #1 (Volume II) comes out in '93 (or maybe late '92) I'm not looking back.

Thanks again for the encouragement.

Cheers

David Lee Ingersoll
P.O. Box 15082
Santa Rose, CA 95402

David, Ger and I are in complete agreement that there is absolutely *nothing* wrong with your artwork. It's very idiosyncratic, it carries the story beautifully. *Misspent Youths* is in my list of top ten comics. Hurry back. We miss you already.

★★★★★★★★★★

Hey, Dave.

Been with ya since #114 (and congrats on breaking 150). So, having lived through a book and a short story, I feel that I deserve to see my thoughts in print . . .

Too bad I only have one thought right now:

Peter Murphy is the god of all rock & roll!

And Daniel Ash is the anti-christ!

Thanx, Dave. I really had to get that one off my chest.

Yours pathetically,

PatMan
2852 Sawtelle Blvd. #21
Los Angeles, CA 90064

See, back when I wasn't answering the letters, everyone would just assume that I know who Peter Murphy and Daniel Ash are. Now that I'm answering the letters I have to admit I don't have a clue.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave:

I just want to write you and tell you thanks for putting out *Cerebus*. The *Jaka's Story* was great as was *Melmoth*. Because of both stories I was tempted to read *Oscar Wilde*. So I picked up *The Picture of Dorian Gray and Other Writings*. I also read up on his life. Both were very interesting and a treat to read. Other than the books you have mentioned in *Cerebus* are there any other books I could hunt down and read?

(By the way I'm listening to Queen; 'A Night At The Opera' album.

1. Where is Astoria? Is she still in prison or did she escape? 2. Is Cirin any relation to Cerebus or

the other aardvark shown in *Church and State II*?

Is Cerebus the stuffed animal still around? I saw the ad in *Cerebus Bi-Weekly* and as a late comer (issue #110) would like my chance to purchase one.

As a last note, Gerhard's backgrounds are terrific (thanks Gerhard!) and the covers are great. Any plans to collect the covers in like a poster book type deal?

Yours,

Margaret R. Tucker
26 Austin St.
Wakefield, RI 02879

P.S. *Cerebus* Readers: Anyone who cares . . . I'm a 20-1/2, red hair, blue eye, SWF, who likes *Cerebus*, the Smiths, Pink Floyd, Willingham's *Elementals*, and would like a man for my sanity to write to. Hell, anyone write it would lighten up my life. Thanks.

P.P.S. Thank you Mr. Sim (have I said that yet?).

***Collected Letters of Oscar Wilde* is still the best, to me, followed by Richard Ellman's biography. The Cerebus stuffed toy is no longer available. No plans to collect the covers at this time.**

Anyone in Rhode Island or vicinity want to lighten up Margaret's life? Be polite, now.

★★★★★★★★★★

First off, sorry about the pink paper but I'm too cheap to buy new stuff . . .

Guten tag, Dave! I must say your reply was unexpected and welcome . . . I treasure your "Brady Roach" drawing forever and ever.

My God . . . according to a slew of new magazines that have nothing better to do, I'm in the "MTV Generation!" What a horrible thing to say! Does this mean all of us who are in our late teens and early twenties are some sort of sniveling acolytes to this great glossy neon-splattered God called MTV? Merchandising taken to its ultimate extreme . . . we're all becoming commercials, soon we'll have individual sponsors and walk around chanting corporate slogans and getting paid for it . . . it's some sort of Orwellian nightmare . . . my roommate will become an IBM commercial, I'll become a spokesman for Toyota . . . suicide is the only answer, Dave.

OK, enough of that pessimistic rambling. Honest, Dave, I'm a cheerful guy, it's the world that's so mean-spirited. I'm a pessimistic optimist, 'zat awright? We Americans are so provincial it's disgustipating. I just finished watching "Northern Exposure," just about the only show on TV I can stand, because it acknowledges that yes, there is a life outside of MTV and Sweet & Low. Bliss. I want to go to Japan someday, or Africa . . . if I become a world-famous comic artist / sensitive musician / novelist / fish scaler and get my smiling countenance on the cover of TIME will I be able to go? No, here I am, stranded in a forgotten corner in Mississippi, the only state that sounds like a damn Scrabble clue? And do you know how hard it is to find decent people here? By "decent" I mean no large baseball cap-wearing shouting beer-guzzling football-hurling narrow-minded oxes, or for that matter no squeaky-voiced sorority color-coordinated clear-skinned bimbos, either.

Great Scott. I *am* a cynic! But must I be the only small-presser in the state of Mississippi? (Check out *The Comicist* #20 if you don't believe me).

How sad, sweet loneliness. Sob. The taste of burnt glass on your tongue. Maybe I should take up shooting small fuzzy animals as a hobby instead.

God, I absolutely love the cover of #152 . . . I attempted to blow it up on a Xerox (oops, *photocopier*, don't want the "X" word to send me checks or legal notices, do I?) but unfortunately I erred somehow and ended up with a 4' X 7' smudged rendition of the lil' aardvark's foot. I hate technology sometimes.

But wait! There's a happy ending to this tale of woe! For I matted the faulty Xer-*duplicate*, sorry-and framed it and entered it as an entry in an abstract art contest and won $5,000,000 which paid for my education in full, and also gave me a chance to buy Finland, which I've always wanted to do. Your share forthcoming, Dave, honest!

Well, we can all dream.

And thanks to you and Pete Bagge, I've managed to kick the Marvel zombie habit and narrowed my "MUST-GET" pile down to five . . . *Cerebus*, *HATE*, *Sandman*, *Doom Patrol*, and *Hulk* . . . damnit, some of us just *need* a little jolly green giant in our lives sometime, don't we? Discriminating tastes are a wonderful thing to have. Schwank, I'm getting an attitude!

Can you have Cerebus say "jellied mongoose" in an upcoming issue? It's been a dream of mine since I was a mere zygote.

Seriously, Dave, *Cerebus* is the toasted bagel filled with cream cheese in a land of Wonder bread . . . thanks for enriching the lives of jillions and jillions of aard-varkians throughout the known universe. Jeepers! I'm swollen with envy! Teach me how to draw little teeny-tiny lines so straight like Gerhard does.

I want Cassandra the Witch to take me away to an adobe hut in Botswana and teach me strange and arcane things one can do with a whisk and bananas . . . but if she's determined to run my heart through the Cuisinart of love and deny me, I'll accept letters from anybody who wants to talk life, death, and exchange photos of George Bush vomiting . . . Replies promised.

They don't even *have* a comic book store in Mississippi, Dave! And in Memphis they just ask me "is he a *mutant* or sumthin?" Sheer hell . . .

Hellos to Nathaniel "Thans" and Isak out in Holland if you're reading . . . sorry, not listening to anything since the stereo committed suicide when some joker stuck a *Warrant* tape in it by accident. What a mess.

Cheers,

Nik
P.O. Box 2230
University, MS 38677

P.S. Fun party trivia fact #1 in a series: Cucumber spelled backwards is "Rebmucuc"! Amaze your friends!

P.P.S. If you read Cerebus wearing 3-D glasses you will find people will look at you rather funny, but it's worth it.

People ask me all the time how I pick the letters. This one, it was the "cucumber" spelled backwards that got me. "Rebmucuc". Now *that's* funny.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave:

Just got back from Saudi Arabia (a worker, not a fighter) and got the sketch you sent (in case you forgot, I sent you the Cerebus hand towel); It was much appreciated and is highly treasured. I had also asked you about original page art, which brings me to the reason I am writing: I have searched high and low for Cerebus original page art

and have hit a dead end at every turn. I realize that you no longer sell the page art yourself, but I am guessing that you do sell it in bulk to a guy who does sell comic page art. If you could give me this guy's name, address and phone number, and anyone else you can think of that may deal in Cerebus page art, I would be forever in your debt. My plan is to purchase a Cerebus page, have it framed and display it in my study (that is, the study I'll have as soon as I buy a house) alongside a few select other comic pages. I'm enclosing a self-addressed envelope so as not to put you through too much trouble. If you are ever in Houston, give me a call and I'll treat you to rib-eye steak, Texas style.

Thanks.

Greg McQueen
6425 Westheimer #2601
Houston, TX 77057

We're going to be auctioning Cerebus pages at each Cerebus/ Great Eastern Convention on the Tour. Houston will be sometime after August 23. If you don't bid successfully on one of them at the Con, I'll sell you one by mail, okay? Okay.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave and Gerhard,

It's kind of funny, when I stop to think about it.

About four years ago (give or take half a year) I was at New York University, working my way toward a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in dramatic writing. My roommate at the time could best be described as an eccentric (and still is, as far as I know). I spent my last two years with this particular gentleman; and as any prolonged contact with a person will do, I picked up a few of his habits. *Cerebus* was one of those habits. My memory isn't quite clear on this anymore, but I believe I bought the first book of *Church and State* before I started with the ongoing issues, but I do recall that I started buying the series regularly just as the final Ascension had begun (I'm pretty sure my first issue was either 102 or 103).

I wasn't buying just one comic then. I was ga-ga over the X-men (and their ten million splinter groups), *Green Arrow* and a whole plethora of mainstream comic crap. I was a Thursday regular at my local comic shop, buying up as much as I could. I kept this up until two months after I graduated. I had decided to stay in New York instead of going back to the folks, even though I was only working about twenty hours a week. I settled into Brooklyn and tried to find work on my days off. With no success.

I'm sure that many a bright-eyed, bushy-tailed little optimist has gone out into the world with his own preconceived notions of how things should be, only to find out that they aren't that way at all. But this was the first time it had happened to me. As I watched the money in my savings start to trickle away as I continually spent more than I earned, I looked for ways to cut corners. At this point I was spending close to ten bucks a week on comics. And an extra ten dollars a week would be one night I could spend away from my dinner in the comfort of some pizza joint. So, in the midst of the summer, I stopped collecting comics. The last issue of *Cerebus* I purchased was the final installment of *Jaka's Story*.

It was a good thing. A couple months later I was "let go" from my part-time job. As a stop-gap measure, I had a friend of mine get me a job as a cashier in a gourmet deli. This stop-gap measure lasted for the next six months.

By the way, if anyone proffers the opinion that the United States isn't in a recession, you may feel free to tell them that they are full of shit.

I thought that I would be able to get a position through an employment agency based on my typing skills and relatively good grammar.

Wrong.

I was given preliminary interviews by these people, and then I never heard from them again. I felt like a useless turd that didn't even know when to go down the toilet when it's been flushed (there's a picturesque metaphor for you). Maybe trying to be a writer wasn't such a great idea. Perhaps I should have studied English instead. Then at least I could get a job teaching. I sure wasn't doing a hell of a lot of writing. I was way too busy feeling sorry for myself.

Eventually though, things did turn around. I found a job (no thanks to the employment agencies) and started to earn the first salary of my life. The summer of '91 saw things starting to brighten after what had been a dismal 1990. In the latter half of that summer, two other guys and I decided to come together as a writer support group. One function of this group was to give each of us a chance to show our work. I started writing again, and suddenly I was starting to write **well.** Sure, it might not be Faulkner or Wilde or Fitzgerald or who have you, but it was getting better.

It was about this time that I decided to start collecting comics again. Except this time I was only going to collect one comic. And you can probably guess which comic that is, can't you?

The first issue I bought upon my return was *Melmoth* Ten. I tried to collect the rest of the back issues of the story, but it proved to be difficult. So I decided to get other back issues that I needed. And when I saw the ad for the signed and numbered edition of the book, I figured I should just go ahead and buy that too. Then I noticed that you were going to be doing a tour of the U.S. this year, so I decided to come to your New York appearance (whenever that is), ask you to sign a few things, and generally act ten years younger than I am.

What exactly is so funny about all this, you might ask yourself ("What the hell is this guy talking about?" may be closer to the mark). Well, it would seem that a lot of major events in my life (or as major as they can be to a 23 year-old) have happened in relation to the opening and closing of the *Cerebus* books. Now you've just started *Mothers and Daughters,* and you have yet to print just how many issues are going to be devoted to this book (or how many parts for that matter). So I'm just going to make a little, tiny, minuscule, microscopic request:

Make it a long book!

I don't want to say you guys are harbingers of doom, yet I must admit that I am going to be getting rather nervous when I know the last issue is on it's way. I would like to go for a stretch without entering yet another new stage of my life, if that is perfectly alright with the both of you. I enjoy your work, but I've had enough cataclysms for at least another year (maybe two).

So cut me some slack!

Sincerely (and parenthetically),

Brian E. Kirby
458 State Street, Apartment One
Brooklyn, NY 11217

Looks like you're safe until November 1995.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

There's this wall between Heaven and Hell, see? And a bunch of the people in Hell (on their day off, or something) manage to dig a hole under this wall. All these people from Hell start pouring into Heaven, much to the chagrin of the people in Heaven. The people from Heaven say, "Hey, you people from Hell can't come here." The people from Hell reply, "How are you going to stop us?" The people from Heaven say, "We'll take you to court!" To this, the people from Hell reply, "How can you? All the lawyers are on our side!" >ba-dump-bump<

Fearing a lawsuit,

Terry Jones
Room 323, Louis Riel House, SFU
Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6

Isn't he great, folks? He'll be back later in the show.

★★★★★★★★★★

Excerpts from the Diary of Pud Withers:

I saw a bird flying early this morning and I wondered what it was thinking about and where it was flying to. It perched on the railing and turned its head first right, then left, then up and down. I thought that it must be looking over all the millions of choices it had; all the places it could go, all the things it could do. Then I thought that we are all really that way, we all have millions of places we could go and millions of things we could do. We have so many choices in our lives and its up to us to make those choices and live our lives as best as we can. Just as I thought that the bird flew away and Mama, it flew so high and so beautifully . . .

Dear Miss Jaka. Dear, Dear Miss Jaka, I don't know what to think of you. I don't know what to do or say. I wish I could express myself to you. I wish — I wish . . .

Mama today I was a weed growing in a bit of dirt by the edge of the wall and I was just about to cut it out when I looked closer. It wasn't a weed, it was a plant, colored green with yellow streaks in it and Mama, it was beautiful . . . I realized then that even the smallest and plainest plants can sometimes be the most important. I didn't pull it out. I hope it's still growing.

Miss Jaka when I see you with your man you don't know how I feel. I feel uncomforiable, and I think it's because I wish I could be like him. I wish I could talk to you and I wouldn't be your grocer, I would be me. Me! Me, with an exclamation mark. You said that once, Miss Jaka, you said that you were happier once, you were "Jaka!" I remember that, but I don't feel like that, I feel like Pud. Not Pud!, just Pud. Stumpy, dreary Pud, with nothing. I wonder what I did wrong, I wonder how I ended up feeling like this, I wish I knew what to do.

Mama today when I looked at that sculpted rock by the roadside, the one that looks like a head, I tried to imagine what it would say if it could talk. I think that it would tell me all the things that it saw passing by. I think that it would teil me that even though it's just sitting by the road halfway up the mountain instead of being in the city it has learned a lot. It knows a lot about the world and how things work in it and the kind of people and it knows just about anything, if it thinks about it long enough. Then the head would say, "And you know, you and I are a lot alike" and it was grinning, and then I was grinning because it does look a bit like me, and because it was right.

Jaka you are so beautiful, I wonder if you know how beautiful you are. So beautiful. Jaka when I hear your voice and when I see you and smell your perfume you don't know how I feel and you don't know what I think, I wonder what I should think, I wonder what I should do, I wonder what I will do, I wonder if anyone else in the whole world could ever possibly understand how I feel.

This one came in anonymously. If it wasn't so well done it would give me the willies. Come to think of it, it gives me the willies anyway.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Mr. Sim and Company,

I am writing to inform you that I am thoroughly impressed with Aardvark-Vanaheim products that I have ordered in the last two months. I have purchased the first four *Cerebus* compilations and plan to order the others until I am current with the story line.

I pride myself on being an intelligent reader and am truly surprised that I had not discovered *Cerebus* earlier. The stories are well written, satirical, and entertaining while the artwork goes from being very simple to some of the most detailed work I have ever seen. The covers on *High Society* and the first *Church and State* are particularly exquisite.

From a business stand-point, the people that I dealt with at Aardvark-Vanaheim were always pleasant and helpful. I received my orders within a week and was pleased to see that everything came shipped in sturdy packaging. I believe that 'professional' sums up Aardvark-Vanaheim.

Just a few closing comments:

a. Has there ever been a deck of Diamondback cards produced and if so, are they still available?

b. Is *Cerebus* artwork available?

Please keep up the good work and continue to turn out a superb product in a market where mediocrity seems to be the standard.

Sincerely,

Mike Riedy
8130 Northway Dr.
Hanover Park, IL 60103

Another unsolicited testimonial for those of you afraid to order reprint books by mail.

We're only selling Diamondback decks at the Cerebus/Great Eastern Conventions in 1992. Next year we'll be offering them by mail and through the distributors. See above for word on selling original artwork.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave—

The last time I wrote you was two summers ago, a pretty happenin' season for me. The woman I was madly in love with finally returned my affections; the band I formed played its first shows (which were, of course, pretty shitty, but people seemed to dig it anyway) and I'd discovered and devoured the entire *Cerebus* saga to date, subsequently making the agonizing transition to a mere 20 pages a month, the anticipation of which has evolved right into my biological clock right in there with meals and sex.

More than any other non-musical stimuli (heck, more than most musical stimuli) your work and your methods are a constant inspiration to me, particularly your sense of scope and dynamics. I wonder how easy it is for you to do something like *Melmoth* (which I found quite beautiful, especially in context of the turbulent events that precede and follow it) when I'm sure you're aware of a somewhat prevalent mentality that considers *Mothers and Daughters* a 'return-

to-form' for the sole reason that Cerebus is running around killing people in it. Which to me is kinda like fast-forwarding through "Raging Bull" to get to the fight scenes.

I bring this up because I deal with a similar mind-set when my band plays — I like hard 'n fast as much as the next guy, but some of the songs I'm most proud of are the slower, more delicately textured ones, which I like to throw in once in a while, if for no other reason than that its a change of pace. The construction of a set list, ideally, can be like putting together a story: its ebbs and flows juxtaposed in such a way that it is no longer merely a series of events, but a whole greater than the sum of its parts. These slower songs (and yes of course there's the possibility that these songs SUCK, but for the sake of argument let's just say they're all right) are as much an intregal part of what we're about as *Melmoth* is to what you're doing, yet both of us have to deal with a contingent of readers/ listeners who, at best, are patiently waiting for us to quit indulging ourselves so we can continue supplying them with an endless barrage of exclamation points and, at worst, just sort of drift away glass-eyed and slack-jawed.

My initial instinct is to just say 'fuck it' but deep down I know that the bottom line is if we don't please audiences, they don't come, we don't get booked anymore and we don't have a place to practice and hone our craft. This doesn't keep me from writing the kind of songs I want to write, but I can't help making sure that I turn out ... well, not anything I'm ashamed of, but a relatively accessible 'rawk' song once in a while just to keep the above-mentioned contingent from nodding off. I wouldn't call it selling out or pandering, because I like those songs too, but I do feel obligated, especially at this early stage of the game.

My band's name is *ZIRCUS* and as it turns out, we're doing fine and obviously so are you. But I'm sure there's a level your circulation could conceivably drop to that would render you financially unable to continue publishing *Cerebus* at least independently. Or is there? How do you deal with this Dave? My educated guess would be that 'fuck it' prevails, but I'm very curious to know to what extent you concern yourself with this kind of thing.

I've included a tape of my *ZIRCUS*, not because it's relevant to what I was just talking about, but because one of the songs, "My Astoria", was kinda based on your book.

The lyrics don't shed any insight or anything but I'm kinda proud of the way I musically aped some aspects of your style (the fusing of many seemingly disparate parts, and your celebrity guest star device — in the case of this song, "appearances" are made by Public Enemy and the Beach Boys). These recordings were made on a home 4-track recorder, which is the musical equivalent of a 24-hour comic, so please listen around the inferior sound quality. I don't know if my stuff's your cup of tea, so just consider it my way of sayin' thanx.

Now it's a year and half later. The aforementioned woman and I are happily living together, my band's doing really well (about to go into a real studio with a real producer to record a real demo — "My Astoria" was one of the first the producer picked to do) and Dave Sim is putting out 20 pages of soul-nourishing beauty a month. As long as this is the case, life's not so bad.

Thanks again,

Joshua Pollock
30-A Abbey St.
San Francisco, CA 94114

P.S. Oh, by the way, I'd never really considered getting a tattoo before, but I woke up one day and realized I really wanted Pope Cerebus on my arm.

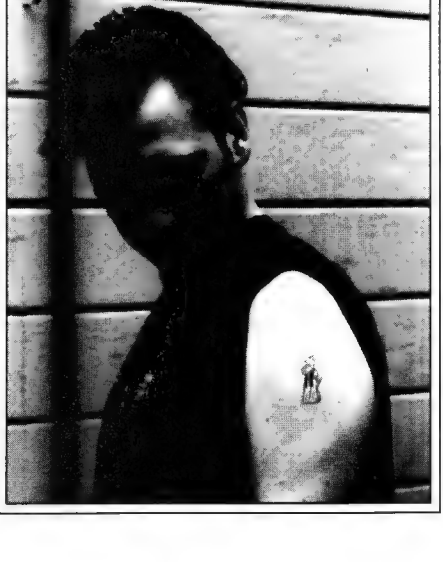
Thanks, Joshua. Keep us posted on *ZIRCUS'* progress.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

So I was watching "Truth or Dare", you know, that Madonna movie, and it occurred to me for maybe the first time just how difficult relationships can be when you're so ungodly famous. You're like royalty; you're almost forced to gravitate to other famous people because you can't trust anyone else. Think about that.

Or think about what it must be like to realize that you're gay. I haven't experienced this personally any more than I've experienced being a celebrity, and I'm running



the risk of sounding, I don't know, presumptuous. But to realize that your search for Love is going to put you at odds with society, that you won't be able to find it without keeping it bidden as though it were something to be ashamed of, or not hiding it and facing whatever scorn and hatred society chooses to inflict . . . Who would choose to assume that kind of emotional burden?

Compared to such obstacle courses, my own gripes and moans don't seem quite as valid. All I'm faced with is finding a reasonably attractive female with an open mind and a love of new experiences. No, this is not some kind of leering sexual innuendo; I mean someone who won't wrinkle her nose at the unfamiliar, whether it's "difficult" music, a movie with a complex plot, or an uncategorizable uniqueness like *Cerebus.* Someone who wants more out of life than goin' to tractor pulls an' football games with her boyfriend and then gettin' hitched an' makin' babies. Someone who's not tied down by a handicapping system of beliefs or prejudices. Someone who wants to experience everything the world has to offer and learn from it all.

Maybe I shouldn't have gone and graduated from college. Out here in the real working world that sort of capacity for independent thought seems pretty rare. I'm working at a gas station right now (What recession? said the President) while considering grad school, and my faith in the intellectual development of the average American citizen is dwindling.

Actual comment: "You read for fun? God, I hate to read! I used to have to do that for school and I hated it!" Then there was the time I was playing a tape and my manager asked "What the Hell are we listening to?" (it was Beethoven's Fifth) and she commented to a visitor, "He's always listening to weird stuff." OK, so I usually listen to an alternative station, but once in a while I like a bit of classical music to mellow out the place. To my manager, though, anything other than country music or Bruce Springsteen is "weird". Then my favorite: When I told the employees at my last job that I would be moving to Japan to work for a year, one of them said, "Whut the Fuck d'you want to go to Japan for? We got everything y'need right here in Amurika!"

Listen to me carrying on. Am I just hypersensitive to the real world because I've been tucked away in the relatively open-minded college world for the last six years? Or are most of the people out there actually as narrow-minded and incurious and provincial and just plain dumb as they appear? Why don't people want to experience more of life than what's inside their little piss-marked territorial boundaries?

Well, shit, Dave. I started out to write a typical my-love-life-sucks letter but now I've gotten mad at the whole world all over again. Maybe I'd better trundle off to bed before I say something really nasty.

Yrs,

Karl Hiller
12097 Cedarcreek Dr.
Cincinatti, OH 45240

Working in a gas station could hardly be called the "real working world"; more like a reality unto itself. Not unlike San Francisco.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Everyone,

I had a dream a few nights back, and you were all in it. Dave was washing my car, and Gerhard was detailing the paint on my house (thanks a lot, too, guys; both those things need the work fairly desperately). Connie Lingus had taken over my room, and turned it into her own performance art studio. Derek McCulloch was just wandering aimlessly from room to room, M'Oak was sitting on the couch spilling his guts to a bunch of supportive listeners, Cassandra and the Ranger had managed to grow a tree in my driveway . . . Chris Romano, of course, was in the corner picking his nose.

All the rest of you were in my apartment mingling. For some reason, the main topic of conversation seemed to be whether *Remington Steele* or *Moonlighting* reruns were better. I'm not really sure why. Still, it was a hell of a party.

Then I woke up, and found that Connie had stolen my Sonic Youth CDs. Thanks a lot.

Sleepily yours,

Emilio Englade
1139 15th Ave. SE
Minneapolis, MN 55414

Rest assured that when I see the Divine Miss L in Pittsburgh in two weeks, I'll get to the bottom of this Sonic Youth CD caper. She's usually so well-behaved, too.

Dear Dave,

My wife Cynthia is so excited to hear about your upcoming visit to Chicago, where we live. We have both been reading *Cerebus* for about four years, and it has become by far our favorite comic. I introduced Cynthia to comic books shortly after we met in 1988 at the University of Chicago. Although she was interested in many of the titles I was reading at the time, it didn't take long for her to differentiate between somewhat mindless comics, and those with substance. she now reads only two titles, yours and *Sandman,* and I fear I may not be far behind her.

My father brought me up on Carl Barks' duck stories, with which he had grown up. As a child I was unable to recognize the wonderful writing and historical references in his (Barks') stories and began to read anything that was colorful and "adventurous." As I look now upon my comic book collection I am amazed at how my taste has changed over the years. I want to rant and complain about the sad state of decay in which modern comic book writing now sits, and I often do, but I cannot forget that I enjoyed all of my comics when I bought them.

I cannot resolve my feelings on the comics industry by categorizing titles as "adult" and "adolescent." There are far too many comics whose artwork, subject matter, and violence I would think are unsuitable for a young audience, but whose writing would better be seen in a grade school textbook. It is as if some comic publishers are trying to increase sales by throwing together whatever popular subjects are at hand along with glossy pages and glitzy, garish colors and a hefty cover price, and at the same time neglecting good writing and even, in some cases, coherancy.

That isn't fun to read! It isn't even interesting, it's insulting! And, at least for me, very, very saddening.

I had hoped to be able to introduce myself a bit, but this seems to be enough for now. Perhaps next time. Looking forward to meeting you here!

Thomas B. Glen III
5220 S. Woodlawn, #1E
Chicago, IL 60615

Well, the ratio is about the same, really. One out of every twenty comic books is good or great. It just means we need six hundred lousy comics for every thirty good ones.

Dear Dave,

"This is my first letter to a comic book" and all that fanboy stuff. I've been buying comics for about seven years and I'm finally writing because I've come across a situation that disturbs me:

I just moved from St. Petersburg (Florida) to Orlando for college (University of Central Florida). I went to the only comic shop within miles, *Dragon's Realm*, to re-subscribe. While browsing through the racks, I noticed an absence of *Cerebus*. Mentioning this to the owner, I was told that they don't normally carry *Cerebus* (but they would order an issue for me every month).

Now, I personally think *Cerebus* is the best comic published today. Among "critical circles," I would assume it's easily in the top ten. Given that, one would think that any intelligent comic book store owner would order at least a couple issues every month (the comic shop owner I used to buy from in St. Pete always ordered a few of EVERYTHING). I mean, you & Ger's stunning covers ALONE should catch the eye of at least a couple of buyers.

But, nobody's going to notice ANY of the many great qualities of *Cerebus* if it's not even on the SHELVES. The *Dragon's Realm* owner told me that *Cerebus* doesn't sell very well. Of course not—he doesn't carry it, so none of his customers know it exists!

But what's really buggin' me is that I think this owner doesn't carry *Cerebus* just because of his personal dislike of you, Dave. When I mused as to why *Cerebus* doesn't sell better considering its incredible quality, he said something to the effect of: "It used to sell better before people got to know Dave Sim. The inker, Gerhard, is a nice enough guy; but Dave is really kind of a jerk." When I pointed your hefty commitment to the book and your efforts to push self-publishing and creator's rights, he admitted that he respected you professionally; but he didn't like you personally.

Well who fucking cares?! I don't care if I saw you walking down the street and I said, "Hey man, great work;" and you said, "Piss off, you silly little bastard"—I'd STILL probably buy the book! And if I were a comic shop owner, I'd probably still sell the book—the more comics sold, the more money made! And the thing is—this is a college town, which means there are a lot more readers looking for a quality book like *Cerebus*.

I don't know how or if this whole thing affects you, but it pisses me off that *Cerebus* isn't getting a fair chance over here. I don't even presume to think I really know you, but I can say I'd rather have some asshole put out a top notch book than have a really nice guy put out something like *X-Force*.

Hey, maybe it's not as bad as I've made it out to be. Maybe he TRIED to sell *Cerebus* and nobody bought it, and he also just HAPPENS to think you're a jerk. I think that anyone selling comics should keep up on everything and push the good, quality stuff; and *Dragon's Realm* is failing, allowing Marvel and DC to get filthy rich on the crap they produce.

Well, just in case you feel like dropping a line to the people at *Dragon's Realm*, the address is 12245 University Blvd., Orlando, FL 32817.

Oh yeah, more fanboy stuff: used to hate the letters pages, but they kinda grew on me. I keep staring at the cover to #153—it just jumps out at me. Noticed Eddie Campbell's Deadface and Neil Gaiman's Death from *Sandman* in (I think) #152 & 153. It's pretty wild that *Cerebus* will (hopefully) remain one of the only constants in my life for the next—oh, I haven't figured out the math—however many years.

See ya, Dave. Hope to catch you at the Miami stop of the tour.

Chad Rivard
3469 Spur Rd. #112
Orlando, FL 32826-3119

Most people who think I'm an asshole have never met me. I always wonder how *they* would feel if people they'd never met hated their guts. It's certainly not the best feeling in the world. Nothing I can do about it, though.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I've been a fan ever since my then girlfriend, now wife, bought me a *Swords* #2 book after visiting her brother in Toronto in 1984.

I've enjoyed them all. Some more than others but always enough to keep sending in the subscription check. I must admit I stopped reading the letters section (probably about the time you stopped replying in print) so I probably won't notice if you print this. But . . . I don't subscribe for the letters and I will continue to subscribe.

I am glad to see Cerebus with a sword in his hand again.

Robert J. Turcotte
P.O. Box 3128
Quincy, CA 95971

Somebody in Quincy want to show Robert this issue's Aardvark Comment? Thanks.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave & Ger,

I just saw you (and actually met and touched you) a couple of days ago in San Francisco at the Holiday Inn. That was very generous of you. Sketch after sketch, for free, and no complaints. Although you wouldn't do my first request (sketch, that is), I thank you from the depths of my soul, Dave. My Goddamned Soul (literally, just ask God)!

I will also mention that I enjoy your funny book. And boy, are the latest issues gut-busters (or gut-slashers). I just about gave myself a hernia laughing at Cerebus' latest little romp through the Cirinists. (End of parenthesis)

My letter now becomes self-serving. My friend Scott, aka ScotT, was kind enough to purchase a deck of Diamondback cards for me in exchange for gas money. And darned if we weren't missing the Magician when we check out the deck. Would you be a dear lad and send a replacement. I would be most grateful.

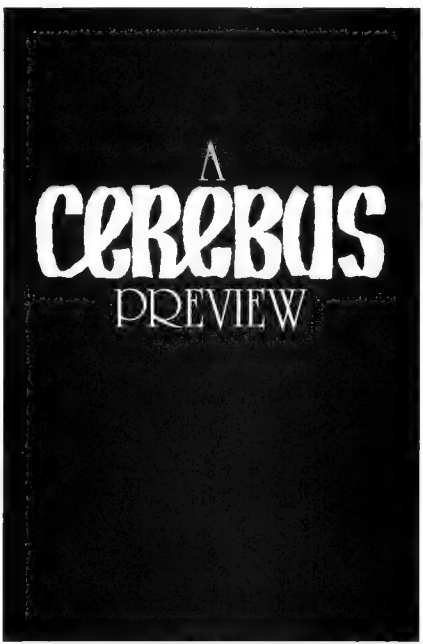
And now, does anyone out there have "I, Claudius," episodes 5 & 6, on tape. If you do, I would love to get my hands on them. I'll pay postage! I'll pay homage! I'll pay retail, damnit! Whatever. That's all.

Thanks for the Firm Handshake,

Steve Krebs
581 E. 9th Street #22
Davis, CA 95616

One magician, coming right up.

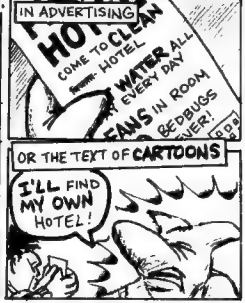
★★★★★★★★★★



This doesn't happen very often. Jeff Gillette sent a package of comic work on speculation, not really knowing very much about Cerebus or me or Aardvark Vanaheim (the package was addressed to Dem). He was just curious as to what I thought of the stuff and whether I was interested in publishing it. He had them all printed up in little booklet form and I was very impressed. I don't think he intends to self-publish and I can't tell you where to buy his work because he's never been published anywhere, but what the hell, eh? So here's "Central Hotel Varanasi". I'm even thinking of printing "Anxiety and Restlessness" in a future issue. If you want to write and tell him what you think of his work, the address is Jeff Gillette, 1998 Huntington, Grosse Pte. Woods, Michigan, 48236-1918.

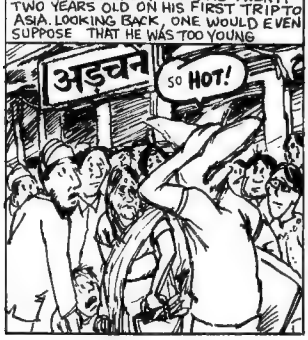
FOR WHOM COULD A TRIP TO INDIA BE CONSIDERED **FUN**? NOTE THE BOLDFACE TYPE IN THE WORD **FUN**.

USING **BOLDFACE TYPE** IS A DEVICE USED IN SCRIPTS IN ADVERTISING



TO CALL THE READER'S **ATTENTION** TO SOMETHING BEING SAID.

THE CARTOON CHARACTER WAS TWENTY-TWO YEARS OLD ON HIS FIRST TRIP TO ASIA. LOOKING BACK, ONE WOULD EVEN SUPPOSE THAT HE WAS TOO YOUNG



TOO YOUNG TO VENTURE INTO SUCH A OBSCENELY BEAUTIFUL AND RAVISHINGLY HIDEOUS PLACE SUCH AS INDIA

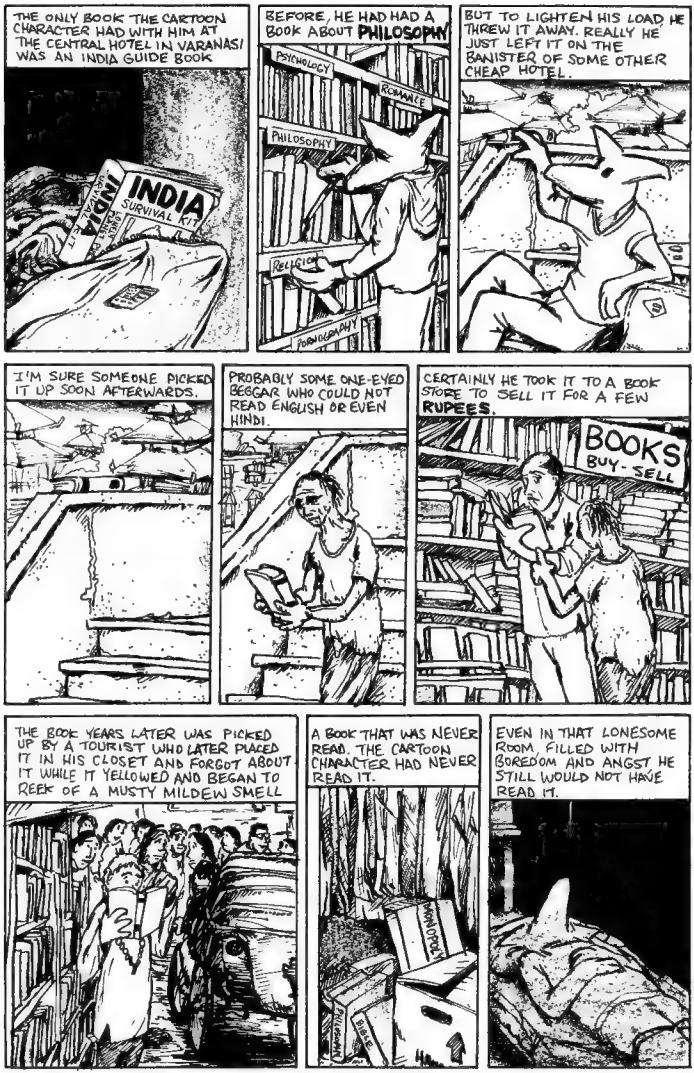
ALONE.

BUT THERE HE WAS.
WITH ALL THE SIGHTS AND SMELLS OF SQUALOR
WHEN THE CARTOONIST SWITCHES ONE TYPESTYLE TO ANOTHER HE USUALLY, AS IN THIS CASE, HAS TO SWITCH PENS.
OH YEAH ALONG WITH THE SIGHTS AND SMELLS THAT GO INTO MAKING INDIA AN ASSAULT ON THE SENSES ARE THE SOUNDS.
SOUND!
HONK!
BEEP!
JITAI!
SWISH!
MOO!
IMAGINE THE SOUNDS OF A MILLION PEOPLE BREATHING AND A HUNDRED PATS OF PAIRS OF SANDALLED, DIRTY FEET TRODDING ON COW MANURE STREETS, GURGLING OPEN SEWERS
PAT PAT PAT
PAT PAT PAT PAT
BLOCK LETTERS ARE USED FREQUENTLY IN COMICS TO ILLUSTRATE SOUNDS. ALMOST ALWAYS THE WORDS ARE ONOMATOPOE)AS: WORDS THAT ACTUALLY IMITATE THE SOUNDS THAT ONE HEARS. LISTEN:
PAT PAT PAT...
THOSE WERE THE SOUNDS THE CHARACTER ACTUALLY HEARD WHILE AT THE SETTING OF THIS CARTOON
THIS TIME IT WASN'T A THOUSAND FOOTSTEPS HE WAS LISTENING TO, JUST A PAIR

A BAREFOOT PAIR OF FEET PATTING ON THE COOL CEMENT FLOOR OF THE HOTEL JUST OUTSIDE HIS
DOOR, AND THEY WOULD FADE AWAY AND DIS-APPEAR.
A GOOD SIMILE TO USE WOULD BE TO SAY THAT THOSE FOOT-STEPS DISSOLVE LIKE —
YOU MUST USE THE WORD LIKE OR AS WHEN WRITING A SIMILE
LIKE HIS FOOTPRINTS IN THE SAND FADE AWAY AND VANISH WHEN EVEN A TINY WAVE WASHES OVER THEM.
WHEN THE FOOTPRINTS AND THE FOOTSTEPS WERE GONE, THE CARTOON CHARACTER
NOT ONLY PHYSICALLY AND LITERALLY WAS ALONE —
BUT MORE IMPORTANT AND POTENTLY DID HE FEEL ALONE.
THE CARTOONIST COULD BE SEEN RHYTHMICALLY SWITCHING FROM ONE PEN TO THE OTHER RIGHT NOW.

DURING THE TIME OF THE INCIDENT THAT THIS CARTOON STORY CONCERNS ITSELF WITH, THE CHARACTER OF THIS STORY COULD NOT BE SEEN VERY WELL.
YANK!
IT WAS DARK.
HE WAS LYING ON HIS BACK IN THIS LONELY, NARROW, HIGH-CEILING HOTEL ROOM
ON A FILTHY, UNKEMPT BED WITH HIS SHIRT OFF
EYES OPEN
STARING AT A LITTLE CRACK OF LIGHT COMING IN FROM WHERE THE CEILING MET THE BACK WALL.
OF COURSE THERE WERE SOUNDS EMINATING FROM THE SURROUNDING ROOMS
AND FROM OUT ON THE NIGHT STREETS WHERE A THOUSAND THOUSAND PEOPLE THROBBED UNDER DANK STREETLIGHTS
AND OF COURSE SOMEWHERE
HOTE

SOMEWHERE THERE HAD TO BE SOME FIGURE ON A BED
HANDS CLUTCHED TO ITS FACE AGONIZING OVER SOME TRAGEDY IN ITS LIFE
FACE SLIPPERY FROM ANGRY, TERRIFIED TEARS
ALONE
ALONE, THE CARTOON CHARACTER LAY.
ALONE
RESEARCH WOULD HAVE TO BE DONE TO FIND OUT EXACTLY WHEN
THE CONVENTION OF USING CLOUDS TO DEPICT THOUGHTS
WAS ORIGINATED, AND BY WHOM.
MY CLOSEST GUESS WOULD BE COMICS OF BUD FISHER. A 1918 EPISODE OF "MUTT AND JEFF" SHOWS JEFF "THINKING" OF EIGHT DOLLARS AS HE IS THROWN OUT A WINDOW HEAD FIRST.
ABSOLUTELY, TOTALLY ALONE.
THE FIRST DIALOGUE (OR IN THIS CASE: MONOLOGUE) BALLOONS APPEARED IN THE FIRST SUNDAY PAPER FORMAT OF NEWSPAPER COMICS ON OCTOBER 18, 1896.
IN A CARTOON CALLED "THE YELLOW KID" BY RICHARD F. OUTCAULT.
PRINTED IN THE NEW YORK JOURNAL. (A RANDOLPH HEARST PUBLICATION.)
IMAGINE THE CARTOONIST,
ALONE
ON A FRIDAY EVENING, POURING THROUGH HIS TOME, THE SMITHSONIAN COLLECTION OF NEWSPAPER COMICS, RESEARCHING SUCH ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS.

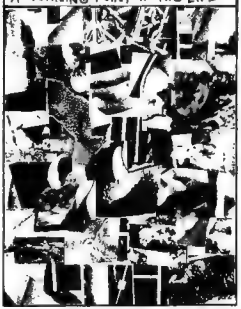

THE ONLY BOOK THE CARTOON CHARACTER HAD WITH HIM AT THE CENTRAL HOTEL IN VARANASI WAS AN INDIA GUIDE BOOK
INDIA
SURVIVAL KIT
BEFORE, HE HAD HAD A BOOK ABOUT PHILOSOPHY
PSYCHOLOGY
ROMANCE
PHILOSOPHY
RELIGION
PORNOGRAPHY
BUT TO LIGHTEN HIS LOAD HE THREW IT AWAY. REALLY HE JUST LEFT IT ON THE BANISTER OF SOME OTHER CHEAP HOTEL.
I'M SURE SOMEONE PICKED IT UP SOON AFTERWARDS.
PROBABLY SOME ONE-EYED BEGGAR WHO COULD NOT READ ENGLISH OR EVEN HINDI.
CERTAINLY HE TOOK IT TO A BOOK STORE TO SELL IT FOR A FEW RUPEES.
BOOKS
BUY - SELL
THE BOOK YEARS LATER WAS PICKED UP BY A TOURIST WHO LATER PLACED IT IN HIS CLOSET AND FORGOT ABOUT IT WHILE IT YELLOWED AND BEGAN TO REEK OF A MUSTY MILDEW SMELL
A BOOK THAT WAS NEVER READ. THE CARTOON CHARACTER HAD NEVER READ IT.
KAMASUTRA
BIBLE
EVEN IN THAT LONESOME ROOM, FILLED WITH BOREDOM AND ANGST HE STILL WOULD NOT HAVE READ IT.

PHILOSOPHY IS JUST TOO DIFFICULT TO READ.
YEARS LATER THE CHARACTER WOULD READ SIMILAR BOOKS
YEARS LATER THE CARTOON CHARACTER WOULD COME ACROSS THE CENTRAL HOTEL IN VARANASI.
YES? GOOD HOTEL
CENTRAL HOTEL VARANASI
WOW...
ON ANOTHER TRIP THROUGH INDIA.
YEARS LATER HE DELIBERATELY WOULD CHOOSE NOT TO STAY THERE BUT WOULD STAY ACROSS THE STREET
SEEMS HE DIDN'T WANT TO CONJOUR UP ANY BAD MEMORIES...
SO WHAT DID HAPPEN AT THE CENTRAL HOTEL SO MANY YEARS AGO?
IT SEEMS VERY PRACTICAL TO STRUCTURE COMICS INTO EPISODIC PANELS - THESE RECTANGLES OF PICTURES AND WORDS.
POK
IN A CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCE WE FOLLOW THE IMAGERY AND TEXT TO CREATE THE STORY.

A CARTOON WITH ITS JUXTAPOSITIONS OF EVENTS AND ACTION COULD BE AN **ALLEGORY** TO A LIFELINE.

LIFE IS AN ACCUMULATION OF A SUCCESSION OF INCIDENTS FLOWING PRETTY SMOOTHLY UNTIL ONE OF THESE EXPERIENCES **CHANGES ALL THE PROCEDING EVENTS**

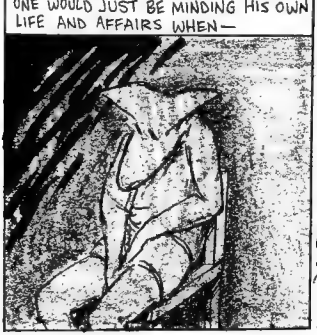
LIKE WHEN A PERSON REACHES A TURNING POINT IN HIS LIFE-

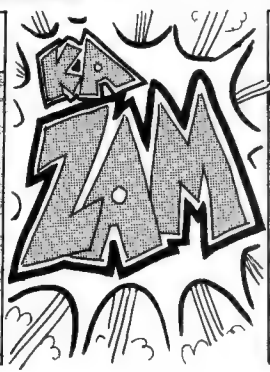


USUALLY EXPERIENCED NEGATIVELY AS **TRAUMA**

OR POSITIVELY AS **ENLIGHTENMENT**

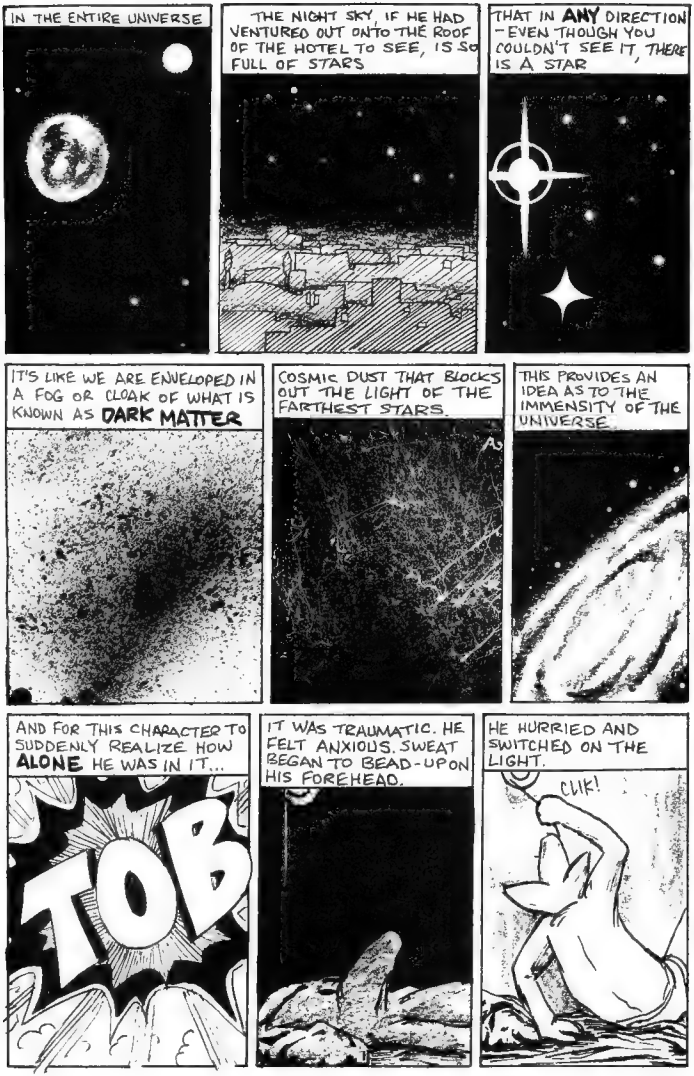
AS ILLUSTRATED IN CARTOON FORMAT ONE WOULD JUST BE MINDING HIS OWN LIFE AND AFFAIRS WHEN—

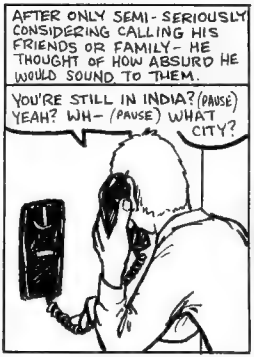




TRAUMA! ENLIGHTEN-MENT! BOTH!

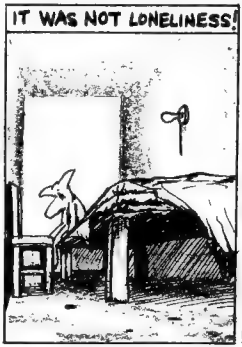
JUST LIKE THAT THE CARTOON CHARACTER REACHED HIS OWN TURNING POINT.
NOTE THE EASILY RECOGNIZABLE SYMBOL OF THE EXPLOSION. ROY LICHTENSTEIN, AMERICAN POP ARTIST PAINTED MANY CARTOON PANELS INCORPORATING THIS SYMBOL.
1965
I DON'T BELIEVE THAT ROY WAS EVEN A CARTOONIST.. A POPULAR PAINTER, BUT NOT A CARTOONIST.
"I WANT MY WORK TO LOOK PROGRAMMED OR IMPERSONAL..."
LICHTENSTEIN WAS WORKING IN DESIGN AND DISPLAY PRIOR TO HIS "ARTISTIC" CAREER.
THE EXPLOSION THAT THE CARTOON CHARACTER FELT WAS NOT REALLY AN EXPLOSION AT ALL
IT WAS AN IMPLOSION A RAPID DEFLATION - AN INSTANTANEOUS DECELERATION
A COMBINATION OF BOTH EMOTIONAL TRAUMA AND INTELLECTUAL ILLUMINATION
THE SUDDEN REALIZATION THAT THE CARTOON CHARACTER, HIMSELF, WAS
COMPLETELY AND UTTERLY ALONE
WUP?
APART AND SEPARATE FROM EVERY ONE AND EVERY THING

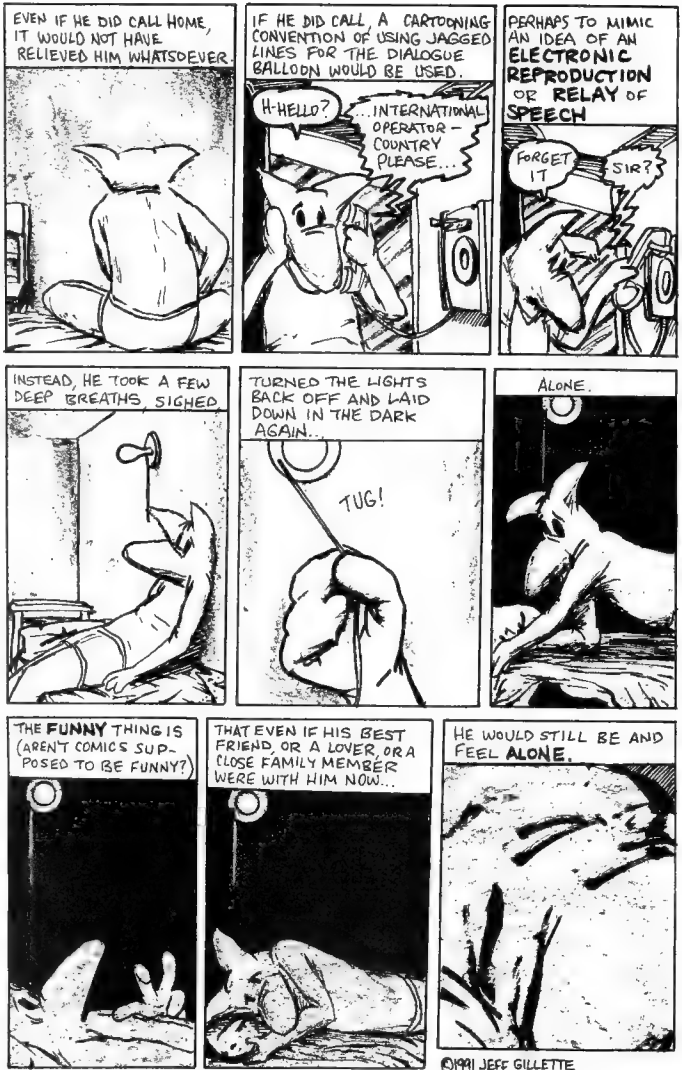

IN THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE
THE NIGHT SKY, IF HE HAD VENTURED OUT ONTO THE ROOF OF THE HOTEL TO SEE, IS SO FULL OF STARS
THAT IN ANY DIRECTION - EVEN THOUGH YOU COULDN'T SEE IT, THERE IS A STAR
IT'S LIKE WE ARE ENVELOPED IN A FOG OR CLOAK OF WHAT IS KNOWN AS DARK MATTER
COSMIC DUST THAT BLOCKS OUT THE LIGHT OF THE FARTHEST STARS.
THIS PROVIDES AN IDEA AS TO THE IMMENSITY OF THE UNIVERSE.
AND FOR THIS CHARACTER TO SUDDENLY REALIZE HOW ALONE HE WAS IN IT...
TOB
IT WAS TRAUMATIC. HE FELT ANXIOUS. SWEAT BEGAN TO BEAD UPON HIS FOREHEAD.
HE HURRIED AND SWITCHED ON THE LIGHT.
CLIK!


AFTER ONLY SEMI-SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING CALLING HIS FRIENDS OR FAMILY- HE THOUGHT OF HOW ABSURD HE WOULD SOUND TO THEM.
YOU'RE STILL IN INDIA? (PAUSE) YEAH? WH- (PAUSE) WHAT CITY?

OR AT BEST THEY WOULD JUST THINK HE WAS **LONELY.**

THEIR LACK OF UNDERSTANDING WOULD ONLY CONFIRM HIS FEELINGS...




EVEN IF HE DID CALL HOME, IT WOULD NOT HAVE RELIEVED HIM WHATSOEVER.
IF HE DID CALL, A CARTOONING CONVENTION OF USING JAGGED LINES FOR THE DIALOGUE BALLOON WOULD BE USED.
H-HELLO?
...INTERNATIONAL OPERATOR - COUNTRY PLEASE...
PERHAPS TO MIMIC AN IDEA OF AN ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION OR RELAY OF SPEECH
FORGET IT
SIR?
INSTEAD, HE TOOK A FEW DEEP BREATHS, SIGHED,
TURNED THE LIGHTS BACK OFF AND LAID DOWN IN THE DARK AGAIN..
TUG!
ALONE.
THE FUNNY THING IS (AREN'T COMICS SUPPOSED TO BE FUNNY?)
THAT EVEN IF HIS BEST FRIEND, OR A LOVER, OR A CLOSE FAMILY MEMBER WERE WITH HIM NOW..
HE WOULD STILL BE AND FEEL ALONE.
©1991 JEFF GILLETTE
A NULLIFICATION PRESENTATION

CEREBUS

SUBSCRIPTIONS

CEREBUS MONTHLY 1 YEAR/12 ISSUES **$45.00**

20 PAGES OF STORY PLUS LETTERS PAGES AND OCCASIONAL BACK UP FEATURES. BLACK & WHITE WITH COLOUR COVER. PRICE INCLUDES POSTAGE. PLEASE INDICATE WITH WHICH ISSUE NUMBER YOU'D LIKE YOUR SUBSCRIPTION TO BEGIN. OUTSIDE CANADA & U.S. ADD $12.00 PER YEAR FOR EXTRA POSTAGE. IN CANADA ADD 7% GST.

REPRINT VOLUMES

CEREBUS 536 PAGES, SOFT COVER	REPRINTS CEREBUS 1 TO CEREBUS 25	**$25.00** PLUS POSTAGE
HIGH SOCIETY 512 PAGES, SOFT COVER	REPRINTS CEREBUS 26 TO CEREBUS 50	**$25.00** PLUS POSTAGE
CHURCH & STATE Vol. I 592 PAGES, SOFT COVER	REPRINTS CEREBUS 52 TO CEREBUS 80	**$30.00** PLUS POSTAGE
CHURCH & STATE Vol. II 630 PAGES, SOFT COVER	REPRINTS CEREBUS 81 TO CEREBUS 111	**$30.00** PLUS POSTAGE
JAKA'S STORY 488 PAGES, SOFT COVER	REPRINTS CEREBUS 114 TO CEREBUS 136	**$25.00** PLUS POSTAGE
MELMOTH 258 PAGES, SOFT COVER	REPRINTS CEREBUS 139 TO CEREBUS 150	**$17.00** PLUS POSTAGE

INCLUDE $3.00 PER BOOK FOR POSTAGE & HANDLING.
CANADIAN CUSTOMERS PLEASE ADD 7% GST.

AMOUNTS QUOTED ARE IN CANADIAN FUNDS. VISA OR MASTERCARD WILL BILL YOU THE EQUIVALENT IN YOUR DOMESTIC CURRENCY AT THE BILLING DATE RATE OF EXCHANGE.

CALL 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. E.S.T.

(519) AREA CODE

VISA **576-7820** OR **576-0610** master charge

OR FAX **576-0955**

INCLUDE: NAME, ADDRESS, DAY-TIME PHONE NUMBER, VISA OR MASTERCARD NUMBER & EXPIRATION DATE OR SEND CERTIFIED CHEQUE/MONEY ORDER PAYABLE TO:

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM INC.
BOX 1674, STATION C, KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

APR 12 DENVER
HOLIDAY INN
I-70 AT CHAMBERS ROAD
* APR 11 • *TIME WARP (BOULDER)*

APR 26 CHICAGO
HYATT REGENCY,
WOODFIELD ROAD, SCHAUMBURG
* APR 25 • *MOONDOG'S (LINCOLN PARK)*
* APR 24 • *MOONDOG'S (MT. PROSPECT)*

MAY 3 MIAMI
PARK PLAZA HOTEL, PALMETTO
EXPRESSWAY & NW 103RD ST.

MAY 31 KANSAS CITY
MARRIOTT, METCALF AVE. IN
OVERLAND PARK

JUNE 7 MINNEAPOLIS
MARRIOTT BLOOMINGTON,
I–495 AT CEDAR AVE.

JUNE 21 INDIANAPOLIS
SHERATON, 7701 EAST 42ND ST.

JULY 12 ALBANY
HOLIDAY INN, 205 WOLF RD.

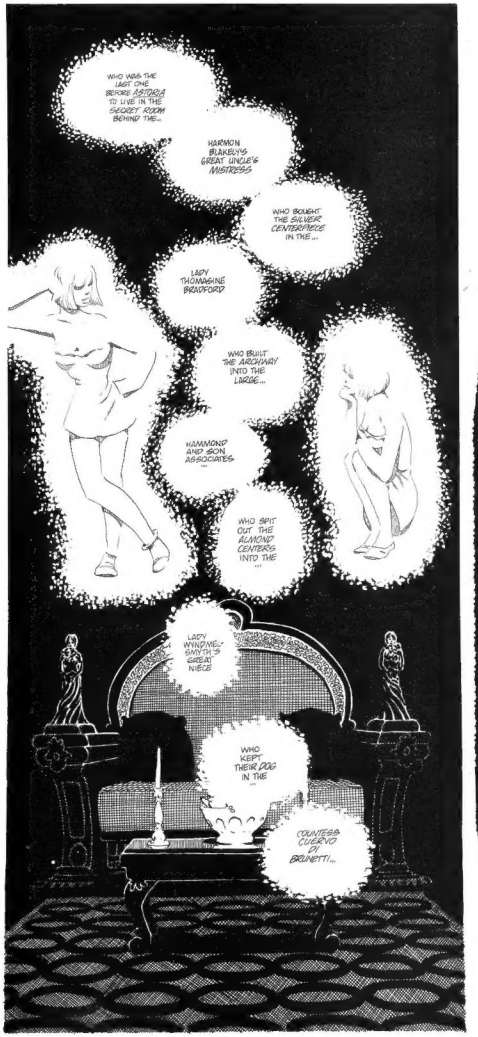
JULY 26 DETROIT
MARRIOTT, 200 W. BIG BEAVER, TROY, MI.

AUGUST 23 ATLANTA
CASTLEGATE HOTEL &
CONFERENCE CENTRE

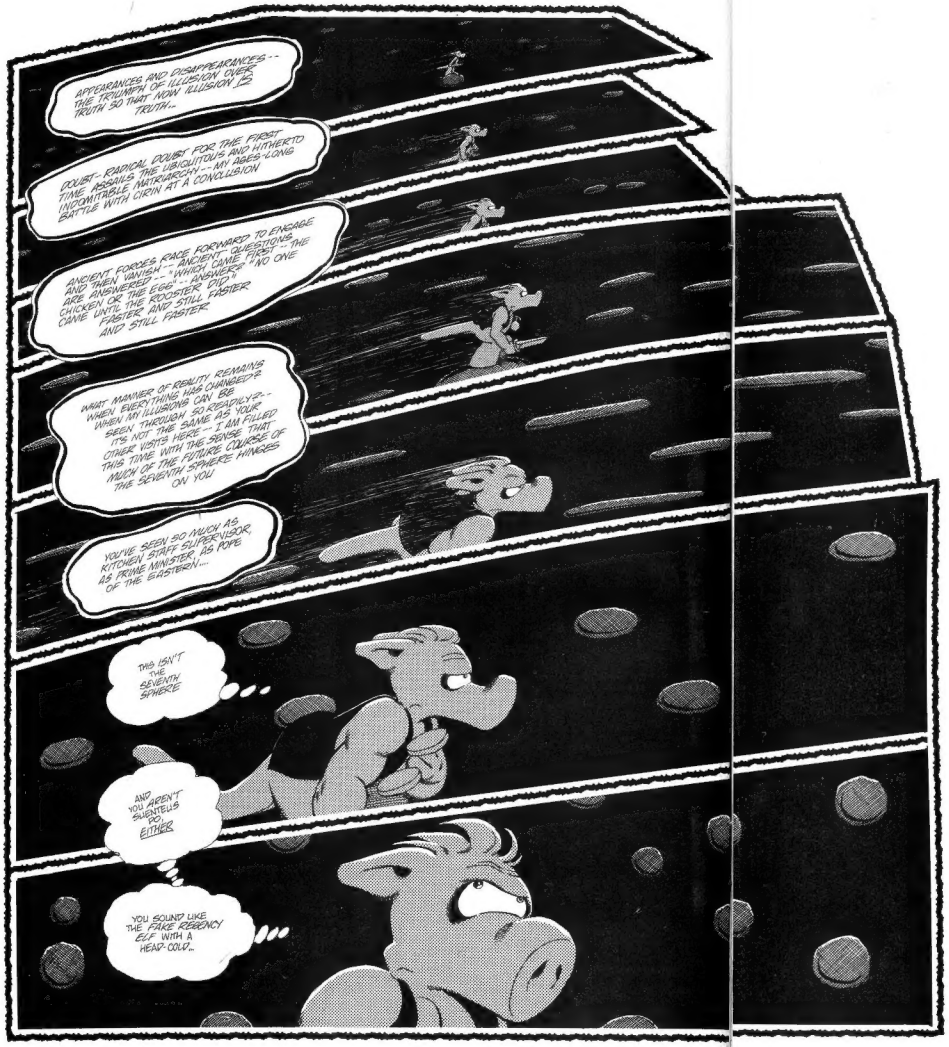
TO BE ANNOUNCED:

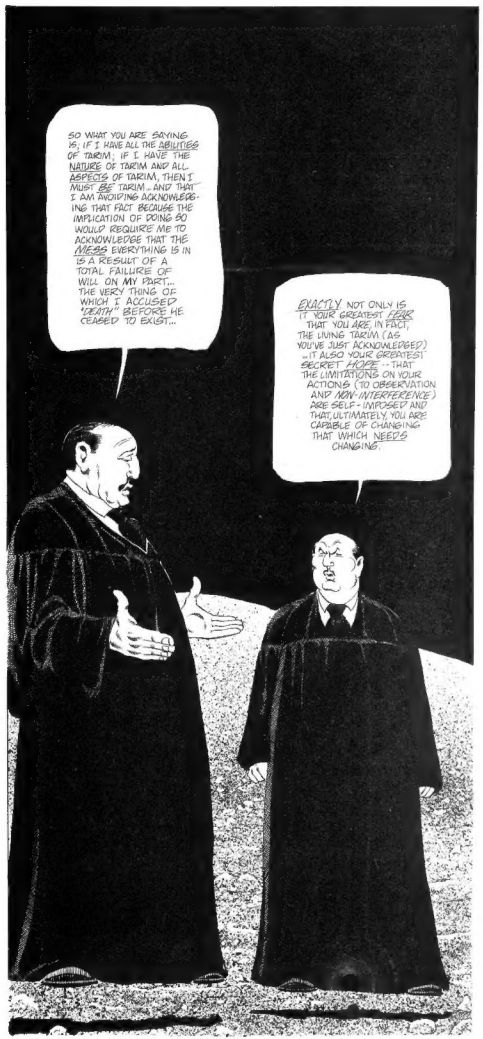
CLEVELAND
HOUSTON
NEW YORK
PHOENIX
PORTLAND
SEATTLE
WASHINGTON

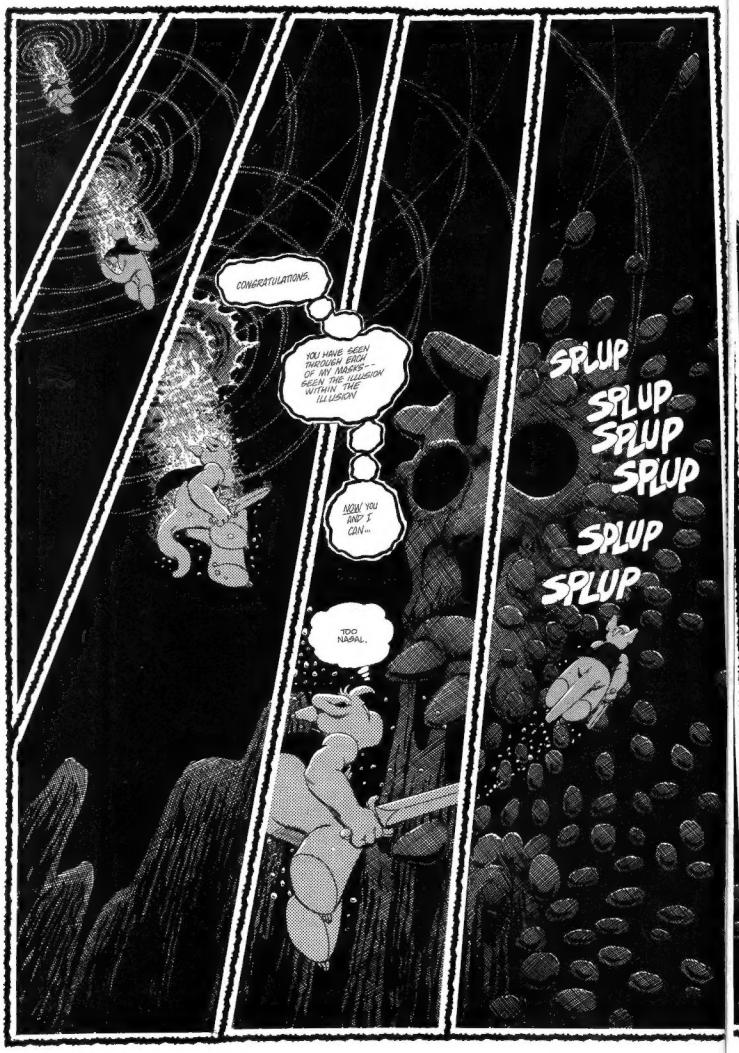
Contact
GREAT EASTERN CONVENTIONS
(908) 788-6845
for details


WHO WAS THE LAST ONE BEFORE ASTRÆA TO LIVE IN THE SECRET ROOM BEHIND THE...
HARMON BLAKELY'S GREAT UNCLE'S MISTRESS
WHO BOUGHT THE SILVER CENTERPIECE IN THE...
LADY THOMASINE BRADFORD
WHO BUILT THE ARCHWAY INTO THE LARDE...
HAMMOND AND SON ASSOCIATES ...
WHO SPIT OUT THE ALMOND CENTERS INTO THE ...
LADY WYNDMERE-SMYTH'S GREAT NIECE
WHO KEPT THEIR DOG IN THE ...
COUNTESS CUERVO DE BRUNETTI...

VERY GOOD, YOUNG CEREBUS
WELL DONE...
YOU'RE LEARNING, FINALLY... HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE ANYONE HAS SEEN THROUGH ONE OF MY BETTER ILLUSIONS?...
VERY GOOD, YOUNG CEREBUS. WELL DONE.
YOU'RE LEARNING FINALLY... HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE ANYONE HAS SEEN THROUGH ONE OF MY BETTER ILLUSIONS
TOO LONG I THINK
TOO LONG I THINK.
SO--LET'S ACCELERATE THINGS A LITTLE BIT--
THE PRESENCE--IF THE BOY (AT THIS IS OF THE PRESENCE--IF THE BOY (AT HASN'T DROPPED) OUT OF REALITY, IT IS (AT THE VERY LEAST) SAFE TO SAY THAT THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN TRUTH AND ILLUSION HAS BEEN RUPTURED----


APPEARANCES AND DISAPPEARANCES -- THE TRIUMPH OF ILLUSION OVER TRUTH SO THAT NOW ILLUSION IS TRUTH...
DOUBT. RADICAL DOUBT FOR THE FIRST TIME ASSAILS THE UBIQUITOUS AND HITHERTO INDOMITABLE PATRIARCH -- MY AGES-LONG BATTLE WITH GIRIN AT A CONCLUSION
ANCIENT FORCES RACE FORWARD TO ENGAGE AND THEN VANISH -- "ANCIENT" QUESTIONS ARE ANSWERED -- "WHICH CAME FIRST -- THE CHICKEN OR THE EGG" -- ANSWERED: NO ONE CAME UNTIL THE ROOSTER LIED FASTER AND STILL FASTER AND STILL FASTER
WHAT MANNER OF REALITY REMAINS WHEN EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED? -- WHEN MY ILLUSIONS CAN BE SEEN THROUGH SO READILY? -- IT'S NOT THE SAME AS YOUR OTHER VISITS HERE -- I AM FILLED THIS TIME WITH THE SENSE THAT MUCH OF THE FUTURE COURSE OF THE SEVENTH SPHERE HINGES ON YOU
YOU'VE SEEN SO MUCH AS KITCHEN STAFF, SUPERVISOR, AS PRIME MINISTER, AS POPE OF THE EASTERN...
THIS ISN'T THE SEVENTH SPHERE
AND YOU AREN'T SUBSERVIENT TO EITHER
YOU SOUND LIKE THE FINAL AGENCY SELF WITH A HEAD COLD...


SO WHAT YOU ARE SAYING IS, IF I HAVE ALL THE ABILITIES OF TARIM, IF I HAVE THE NATURE OF TARIM AND ALL ASPECTS OF TARIM, THEN I MUST BE TARIM... AND THAT I AM AVOIDING ACKNOWLEDGING THAT FACT BECAUSE THE IMPLICATION OF DOING SO WOULD REQUIRE ME TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE MESS EVERYTHING IS IN IS A RESULT OF A TOTAL FAILURE OF WILL ON MY PART... THE VERY THING OF WHICH I ACCUSED "GRAITH" BEFORE HE CEASED TO EXIST...
EXACTLY. NOT ONLY IS IT YOUR GREATEST FEAR THAT YOU ARE IN FACT, THE LIVING TARIM (AS YOU'VE JUST ACKNOWLEDGED) ...IT ALSO YOUR GREATEST SECRET HOPE -- THAT THE LIMITATIONS ON YOUR ACTIONS (TO OBSERVATION AND NON-INTERFERENCE) ARE SELF-IMPOSED AND THAT, ULTIMATELY, YOU ARE CAPABLE OF CHANGING THAT WHICH NEEDS CHANGING.



so we got a volunteer for the suicide mission from among the infertiles, provided her with a crossbow and had her walk straight into the crisis area while we all monitored through her eyes.

Cirin:
And?

General Greer:
It's one man. Dressed completely in black. Design of a skull on his upper torso. The weapons are hand-held. She didn't get close enough for us to get a good look but they seem to be miniature cross-bows, capable of firing dozens of bolts simultaneously. Accurate, too. She was still a couple of hundred meters away and he hit her three times in the left breast.

Cirin:
I see.

General Greer:
She didn't live long enough for us to get a close look at her wounds but from what we could see, they weren't consistent with a usual crossbow bolt wound. They were much larger . . . *much* larger. Somehow the bolt expands or bursts on impact. Anything within a meter of any vital organ is going to be fatal and he doesn't seem to miss by a meter for the most part.

Cirin:
We'll just have to over-whelm him with sheer force of numbers, then.

General Greer:
With all due respect, Great Cirin, there's no evidence that they would get within range no matter how many of them there are. We've already lost all five dozen soldiers we had within the perimeter and we still don't have a clear picture of what we're dealing with. If possible, we'd like to have a few hours to review what we do know and then propose a few different courses of action that we think have a good possibility of success.

Cirin:
Normina . . . General Swartskof. She's dead then?

General Greer:
I'm afraid so . . . all of our people in that area of the Lower City.

Cirin:
We'll just have to carry on, then. Nothing must be allowed to threaten the One True Ascension.

General Greer:
Yes, Great Cirin.

Cirin:
Assemble your staff, then, and put your minds to it. I'll expect your recommendations by nightfall.

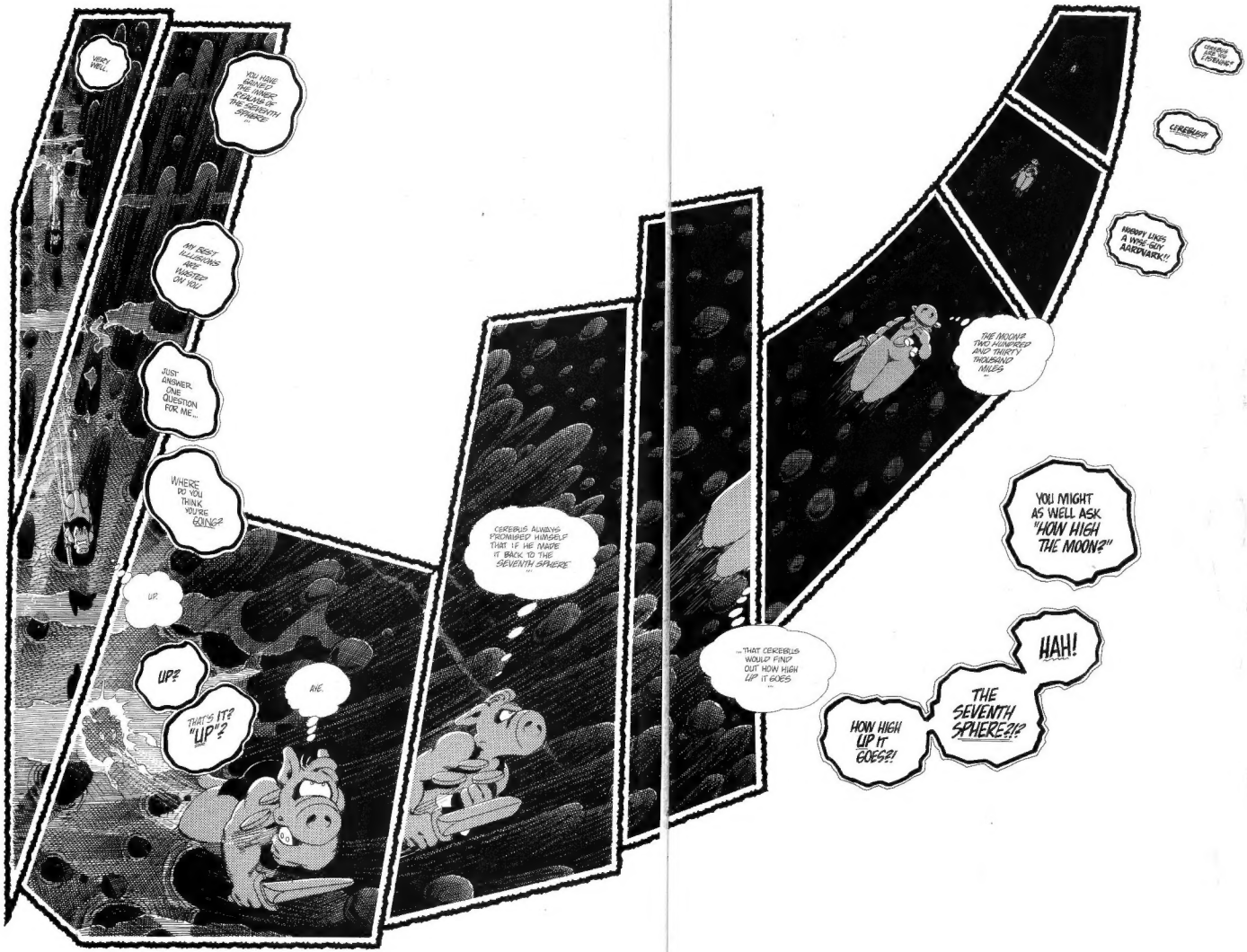
General Greer:
Yes, Great Cirin. Something I forgot to mention that the infertile saw on the way in. A number of hand-painted signs were posted around the crisis area.

Cirin:
Signs?

General Greer:
Yes, Great Cirin. They said "Welcome to Roachland." We're not sure what it means.

Cirin:
I see. Thank you, General Greer. Dismissed.

General Greer:
Yes, Great Cirin.


VERY WELL.
YOU HAVE GAINED THE INNER REALMS OF THE SEVENTH SPHERE.
MY BEST ILLUSIONS ARE WASTED ON YOU.
JUST ANSWER ONE QUESTION FOR ME...
WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?
UP.
UP?
THAT'S IT? "UP"?
AYE.
CERBERUS ALWAYS PROMISED HIMSELF THAT IF HE MADE IT BACK TO THE SEVENTH SPHERE...
...THAT CERBERUS WOULD FIND OUT HOW HIGH UP IT GOES.
HOW HIGH UP IT GOES?!
THE SEVENTH SPHERE?!?
HAH!
YOU MIGHT AS WELL ASK "HOW HIGH THE MOON?"
THE MOON? TWO HUNDRED AND THIRTY THOUSAND MILES.
HAPPY LIKES A WISE GUY AARDVARK!!
CERBERUS?
CERBERUS! THERE'S TROUBLE!